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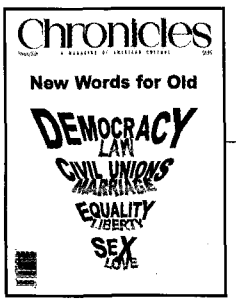

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On the Beauty of Holiness

The lead pieces in the December issue ("The Beauty of Holiness") are more mystifying than enlightening. Much of this issue consists of supercilious ridicule of poor souls who try to honor God with imitative architecture and inadequate art, followed by sympathetic words for moral and social degenerates who were prudent enough to repent before dying—or at least, in one case, to repent of not yet repenting. Several of the authors seem to be appealing to standards to which ordinary people can only defer but never really comprehend. To read this issue with understanding, one would have to have wisdom greater than Solomon's.

There is praise for cathedrals of the past, and even for Rome's Pantheon, but we are not to imitate them. Poor souls, Catholics and Anglicans, erect neo-Gothic churches as though they were medieval men and women, just as pitiably as Baptists and Methodists try to create buildings that no one could mistake for factories or grain silos. Worse still are the pseudo-modern structures better suited to chess competitions between computers than to the worship of the living God. We simply do not know how to do it right, and *Chronicles* is not going to show us.

Chancellor Patrick's essay ("Pugin and the Gothic Dream," *Views*) is both confusing and irritating, as least to a reader who is not willing to accept *infidelity* as a synonym for *Protestantism*. The watchwords of the Protestant Reformation were *sola gratia* and *sola fide*—by grace alone, through faith alone. What is James Patrick trying to tell us? Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution created wealth for some, misery for many, and English religion deteriorated. Not real news, that. The world was growing uglier, and his author, A.N.W. Pugin, had the answer: a return to medievalism.

The Renaissance and the Reformation caused the trouble. Patrick can get away with calling the Renaissance classicism, but to imply that Protestantism means infidelity is odd in view of the Protestant battle-cry, *sola fide*. Luther called for *explicit faith*, requiring explicit knowledge of the Gospel, and rejected the Roman Catholic *implicit faith*, implicit acceptance of whatever the Church teaches, whether one knows it or not. It is not clear how classicism, as Patrick sees it, denies transformation by grace in this life, rejects good works, and seeks to get ahead in the world without reference to the moral government of God or the pursuit of holiness. Whatever this is, it certainly is not Reformation Protestantism, either Lutheran or Calvinist. Luther rejected salvation by works, but, as he makes plain (for example, in commenting on Galatians 5:6), we are to offer faith to God, who has no need of our works, and do good to our fellow men, who have no need of our faith (of their own, of course, but not of ours).

Do I understand Patrick to mean that the cause of all of the trouble was Protestantism? He says flatly, "Pugin was right . . . The obvious solution was for everyone to become Catholic." The 15th century, which Pugin extols by comparison with the 19th, began with three popes and reached a climax of papal corruption and decadence with Alexander VI. We can hardly expect the College of St. Thomas More to mention that. Patrick's concluding words are strange: Is it good for preaching to be boring, and children and adults to be fascinated by pointed windows and tracery? Surely, we can hope for better. This is a sad thought at Christmastime, the beauty of which depends not on the scene in the manger but on the fact that Christ was born.

—*Harold O.J. Brown*
Charlotte, NC

Dr. Patrick Replies:

I will not defend what the Church calls theological faith, or the gift of believing what God teaches in the Church simply because God teaches it, even if we do not understand it fully, since this is simply a difference between Catholics and Protestants that persists. Professor Brown writes that it is not clear how classicism (as I see it) "denies transformation by grace in this life, rejects good works, and seeks to get ahead in the world without reference to the moral government of God." Of course, the relation between the Renaissance and the Reformation is dauntingly complex, but I suggest the following. Reformers such as Luther and Renaissance philosophers

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such as Pico della Mirandola shared an interest in antiquity and a detestation of the tradition as received. On many other matters, they apparently differed, with Renaissance philosophers defending human omnicompetence and Calvin and Luther arguing man's incompetence in anything touching his salvation. But, while coming at the question from different starting points, the thought of both Luther and Pico tended to make man at home in the world—the philosopher, by arguing that the human domination of everything is natural and therefore commendable; the reformer, by insinuating that man's actions in this world could not have any salvific consequences. Renaissance philosophers and poets tended to believe that the simple human joys ought to occupy us this side of the grave, and, in a backhanded way, the great continental reformers would have agreed. Both Luther and Calvin proposed systems that created a disjunction between human action and our eternal destiny, leaving men free to make of the world what they would. The rejection of the traditional doctrines of good works and merit and with this the weakening of the fear of Hell and love of Heaven—if God does not care what I do in this world, why worry?—made a new and different civilization. For the reformers generally—and, yes, there are exceptions and degrees—human action has little or nothing to do with salvation, either because our behavior is caused immediately by the predestining will of God, or because human effort is by nature so vile that every good work courts presumption. This left mankind free to engage nature and society as domains useful principally for the expression of power and pleasure, creating along the way the Georgian village of the 1820's, which Pugin detested, in which the central features were the brewery and the bank, and ultimately the postmodern culture of comfort in which we all participate.

The brewery and the banks are certainly goods of some kind, but they are secondary goods, serving to blot out (save in self-aware and highly disciplined individuals) the primary relations between man and God, man and man, and man and nature. Of course, to imply, as Pugin did, that Renaissance classicism provoked infidelity by way of the Protestant Reformation is not to argue that Protestants are infidels. Men are often a good deal better than their theories—and (more often) worse. If the apprehension of truth made men good, it should be demonstrable (by my lights) that Catholics are just better people and Protestants, somehow morally impaired. In fact, although an empirical study of intentions is impossible, the reverse is often apparent: Catholics are often moral failures of the most obvious and lamentable kind, seemingly insensible of God's claim on their love and duty, while Protestants often walk thoughtfully in the presence of God. I think what Pugin saw was that the tendency of the Renaissance and Reformation, by way of the unlikely alliance mentioned above, was to render the world an arena not of worship, work, and play leading to salvation but an environment of getting on, in which religion, where it persisted, became a private goodness incapable of challenging the cultural dominance of the bank and the brewery.

On the Pugin point, just how artifacts come to represent ideas is a central problem for aesthetics, and one may certainly fault Pugin, as I did and do, for having maintained with quixotic zeal that Gothic architecture was the exclusive architectural representation of Catholic ideas and piety, and for doing so at precisely the time when culture and technology would make the Gothic Revival an intellectually impossible project. Pugin did see some principles that have permanent value. He saw that Gothic is beautiful and that beauty is indeed the splendor that belongs to truth. Pugin also saw intuitively that a civilization without screens (or railings) separating the holy from the commonplace would soon be a public culture without just hierarchy and, hence, without God, however that matter might lie in men's hearts.

On Historical Thinking

I truly enjoyed Scott P. Richert's excellent review of *Remembered Past: John Lukacs on History, Historians, and Historical Knowledge: A Reader* ("Truth of Blood and Time," December 2005)—a compendium of some of Professor Lukacs's most insightful work.

As noted by Mr. Richert, ISI, the publisher of this tome, has produced a terrific primer on the work and thought of a most original and erudite writer. *Remembered Past* invites its reader to sample the vast array of subject matter tackled by Professor Lukacs over the years—from musings on Henry Adams and Agnes Repplier (one of America's finest essayists) to the development of Professor Lukacs' *magnum opus*, *Historical Consciousness*. Originality and erudition marks his life's work.

Mr. Richert's review of this valuable compendium crystallizes many of the critical yet provocative themes Professor Lukacs has invested a lifetime expounding: history as a form of thought, the historicity of human cognition, and, most interesting for me, the ever-increasing intrusion of mind into matter—just to name a few.

With his lucid and engaging prose style that *Chronicles* readers have come to enjoy from his *Rockford Files*, Mr. Richert demonstrates his ability as a leading interpreter and expositor of a Lukacs-Barfield inspired form of historical philosophy. It rests on the recognition that the expression of truth—for which philosophy was supposed to serve—is affected by time, by place, by civilization. Mr. Richert, quite aptly, offers an insight that Professor Lukacs would no doubt underscore: that "life itself is threatened whenever we begin to separate ourselves from our history, to erase our memory . . . to believe that truth is universal . . . not of this world of flesh and blood and time." For Lukacs, Barfield, and now Richert, historical philosophy rests on the commonsense recognition that historical thinking has entered our very blood; it is a form of thought that may be applied to every kind of human experience, and, as a form of thought, it is larger than science.

Much like his intellectual forerunner, Jacob Burckhardt, Professor Lukacs has not sought to cobble together a system that would establish abstract laws governing the patterns of history. As illustrated in the contents of *Remembered Past* and distilled in Mr. Richert's review, Professor Lukacs's interests focus on the concrete historicity of knowledge, of consciousness, of thought.

In the past, I have chided Mr. Richert to begin writing an authoritative work on Professor Lukacs's unique contribution to the exploration of historical consciousness and the explications of historical philosophy. With the release of *Remembered Past*, coupled with Mr. Richert's evident mastery of the subject matter, my original chiding has been elevated to a friendly admonishment—for the Burke-Paine debate could be but a single chapter within this soon-to-be-written work!

—Michael J. Keegan
Washington, D.C.

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by Thomas Fleming

Stargazing

Remember when *Time*'s man of the year, apart from the parade of presidential feebs and felons, was some hero or villain you had to respect, if not always admire? Among the heroes was the first recipient, Charles Lindbergh, as well as Charles de Gaulle and Lech Walesa. The villains included Hitler, Stalin, and Ayatollah Khomeini. Where to put Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Martin Luther King, Jr., I leave to you.

In recent years, *Time* has accelerated its search for the trendy or tear-jerking, naming the founder of Amazon in 1999, Rudy Giuliani in 2001, whistleblowers in 2002, the American Soldier in 2003. This year, *Time* climaxed its plunge into pop culture, naming as the "Good Samaritans" two mischief-making do-gooders, Bill and Melinda Gates, and Bono, self-appointed conscience of the chic and dumb.

Apart from his relentless quest for public approval, Gates is only one of a long line of hypocritical robber barons seeking redemption in philanthropic acts designed to make the world a worse place. I leave it to a younger generation to judge the music of U2, but even by the deteriorating standards of rock music in the new millennium, they nauseate me with their slick and predictable song stylings and their Christianity-lite piety.

I suppose that such criticism, coming from someone who keeps pop music at about the same distance as a strange-acting canary just off the plane from Bangkok, is more than a little unfair, but as the cult of celebrity reaches higher and higher peaks of absurdity, I continue to be astonished by an American people that seemed ready to fly the flags at half-mast for a trash-mouthed comic whose greatest accomplishment was to set himself on fire, while free-basing cocaine. Actually, the half-mast flags were for Eugene McCarthy, but it was the comic who got the headlines, while Clean Gene was consigned to the back pages or, worse, the editorial page.

Richard Pryor, according to Spike Lee, "Was great. He was an innovator. He was a trailblazer, and the way he showed social commentary in his humor opened up a universe for other comics to follow in his footsteps."

In other words, if you dare not let your kids turn on the TV, lest they hear about things you never dreamed of doing, we have Mr. Pryor to thank. The *New York Times* was even more effusive: "Mr. Pryor's brilliant comic imagination and creative use of the blunt cadences of street language were revelations to most Americans."

I don't know what sterile cocoon the *Times* editorialists inhabit, but "the blunt cadences of street language" have been heard on the street for decades, screamed out by crackheads and aspiring rap artists who think *mo-fo* is the definite (and indefinite) article.

I have never understood why Richard Pryor or George Carlin—as original as the village atheist, as intelligent as the village idiot—are to be revered for using words that bad little boys like to say around the campfire. I remember, as a wicked child, pulling the old wheeze on younger children, "Go ask your mama what '——' means," then hiding outside the door to hear what happened. When you are ten, this is funny stuff (until you are spanked for it), but what do we think of grown men who think a whoopee cushion is the height of comedy?

It is not the prevalence of scummy language that disturbs me so much as the idolizing of perennial adolescents that is so much a part of our culture. I had friends who used to bore me to tears analyzing the theology of Paul McCartney songs. Then there were the dopers who wanted to "interpret" Bob Dylan's never-ending flow of clumsy gibberish crammed into the form of greeting-card verses. Dylan's "poetry" occupies a special niche in the Nonsense Hall of Fame, along with Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven," George Will's rhapsodies on baseball, and the foreign-policy pronouncements of Condoleezza Rice.

Nothing in this life of ours can be taken seriously unless it is pumped and pushed by some blank-faced celebrity with a brain as unfurrowed as his forehead. I feel sorry for poor L. Ron Hubbard. Whacky as his thin-gruel Satanism is, it deserves better than to be represented by Tom Cruise.

As pernicious an award as the Nobel Peace Prize is, Mohamed El Baradei deserves better than to be upstaged by a bevy of "global celebrities, including Salma Hayek, Julianne Moore, and Duran Duran," who went all the way to Oslo to perform a tribute to the Nobel peace laureate "for his efforts to save humanity from nuclear weapons." When Miss Moore is not saving humanity, she is appearing unclothed in films and doing nude photo layouts. But she is a prude compared with Miss Hayek, whose nude sex scenes have popped the pimples of a billion prurient adolescents. I can only imagine the Norskis in their cups, disappointed at seeing the ladies rather less *déshabillées* than on the screen, screaming, "Take it off!" Who could blame them? There is a name for women who do this kind of thing, even "virtually," for money. I wouldn't dream of attacking the right of pretty girls to appear in public, with or without clothes, but isn't there one person on the entire Nobel committee who might have prevented this travesty of a travesty?

This is a different world from the world of our fathers, and, to gauge the difference, check out "today's birthdays" reported on radio stations or on websites. In the Old World, December 21 was the birthday of Thomas à Beckett, Jean Racine, Benjamin Disraeli, L.H. Morgan, Jean-Henri Fabré, Rebecca West, and Anthony Powell. In the New World, we celebrate actors and actresses Richard Long, William Lundigan, and Samuel L. Jackson; a slew of athletes; and, oh yes, "journalist" Tina Brown.

When Juvenal complained that the Roman Empire tranquilized the mob with bread and circuses, Rome was still producing such statesmen as Titus and Trajan and such writers as Tacitus, Martial, and Juvenal himself. We have to be content with the likes of Tina Brown, who is neither an American nor a writer. The real point of Juvenal's complaint is that the Roman people, stuffed and titillated, would allow their rulers to do anything they liked. Instancing the fall of Tiberius' minister Sejanus, attacked by the same mob who had cheered him on a few days earlier, Juvenal concluded that all political ambition is as futile as it is dangerous. Of course, we good republican Americans know how wrong he was.

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GEORGE W. BUSH, between Thanksgiving and Christmas last year, gave a series of speeches seeking to justify his policy in Iraq. The opening shot came at the Naval Academy in Annapolis on November 30, when he outlined the new "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq" and declared that there is no alternative to a complete victory. At the Council on Foreign Relations on December 7, the President said that "some are calling for us to withdraw from Iraq on a fixed timetable," but doing so "would give the terrorists exactly what they want."

That was all old hat, but addressing the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia on December 12, Mr. Bush said something interesting. He asserted that "the entire world thought [Saddam] had weapons of mass destruction" but added that even "knowing what I know today"—*i.e.*, that the Iraqi dictator had no WMDs—"I'd make the decision again. Removing Saddam Hussein makes this world a better place and America a safer country."

Two days later, on December 14, Mr. Bush went a step further, making what sounded like a startling admission. "[I]t is true that much of the intelligence turned out to be wrong," he said. "As President, I'm responsible for the decision to go into Iraq—and I'm also responsible for fixing what went wrong by reforming our intelligence capabilities. And we're doing just that." In a highly polished television address on December 18, he repeated the same point: "It is true that many nations believed that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. But much of the intelligence turned out to be wrong. As your president, I am responsible for the decision to go into Iraq. Yet it was right to remove Saddam Hussein from power."

The mainstream media inexplicably confused Mr. Bush's acceptance of responsibility for the decision to attack Iraq on the basis of flawed intelligence with his supposed acceptance of responsibility for that flawed intelligence itself. On December 14, *FOX News*' Brit Hume thus declared that Mr. Bush "said he takes full responsibility for the decision to invade *and* for any intelligence failures." A similar verdict was passed by the pundits at NPR, CNN, and countless print-media outlets.

Talking to Hume immediately after the speech, however, the President should have dispelled any such notions when he reasserted his old claim that he and Congress had "looked at the same intelligence" before the war. If it had been Mr. Bush's intention to "take full responsibility for any intelligence failures," he would not have needed to redeploy the misleading argument about "the same intelligence." Furthermore, in the same speech on December 14, Mr. Bush repeated the old claim that "now there are only two options before our country: victory or defeat." That is not the language used by an apologetic, chastised President who is rethinking his policies.

So what was the point of his "accepting responsibility," such as it was? It came in the midst of a very rough patch for the President, and the cynic may conclude that Mr. Rove *et al.* had deemed that a dose of ostensible humility, devoid of any politically significant substance, could do Mr. Bush no harm. The Senate had just refused to renew the USA PATRIOT Act in its present form, and the White House had lost a battle with Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona over the use of torture.

More seriously still, the *New York Times* had just revealed the large-scale surveillance of U.S. citizens without court warrants, and Mr. Bush was on shaky grounds trying to justify the practice by claiming that he was given open-ended, sweeping executive powers with the War Powers resolution drafted in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. He is mercifully aware that constant and thorough surveillance of the Muslim community in the United States is necessary and fully justified, and it is of course absolutely essential to control pro-jihadist groups, such as CAIR. Nevertheless, although the right to privacy is not enshrined in the Constitution, it is implicit in many of its provisions. Maintaining at least a nominal judicial scrutiny of the process is essential.

In all of his dozen or so speeches on Iraq in the final weeks of 2005, Mr. Bush did not manage to correct the impression that he and his team continue to confuse operational effectiveness with strategy. The White House keeps reasserting the strategic objective as "helping the Iraqi people defeat the terrorists and build an inclusive democratic state." This definition, its elaboration, and the President's oft-repeated justifications are all eerily reminiscent of Robert McNamara's outline of American goals in Vietnam, stated in 1964.

The Iraqi operation is in deep trouble, and Mr. Bush's oratory has done little to rescue it or to reassure the nation that the effort is worth yet more blood and treasure. His real problem is that the reasons for war remain obscure, and it may be years before we find out what combination of interests and motives caused it.

—*Srdja Trifkovic*

INTELLIGENT DESIGN had its day in court in Dover, Pennsylvania, and the result was sadly predictable. So was the reaction to it.

The evolutionist and atheist left ballyhooed the decision as another victory for science over superstition, and for the separation of Church and state. The intelligent-design crowd vowed to continue fighting, and talk radio unlimbered its voice. "Who should get a lump of coal for Christmas?" Sean Hannity's guest host asked. "The judge in the case about intelligent design!" answered one irate caller.

Yet no one with any sense, least of all serious Christians, is surprised or even disheartened by the decision, for one simple reason: The atheist left runs the courts and the schools, and sober Christians know they will never change that. They don't care what the public schools teach because their children do not attend them.

Intelligent design is the claim that some biological processes and structures are so complex that God, not evolution, must have created them. The trouble in Dover began when the school board said teachers must read a short statement about intelligent design in the ninth-grade biology class. The disclaimer said evolution is merely a theory, and that the "theory is not a fact. Gaps in the theory exist for which there is no evidence. . . . Intelligent design is an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Darwin's." The statement goes on from there, but you get the idea.

Using such phrases as "breathtaking inanity," the judge zapped the school board's statement with a judicial light-

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ning bolt. He concluded that the proponents of intelligent design wanted to smuggle religion into the science classroom, a mortal sin against the leftist ideology of public schools.

The upshot was that the proponents of intelligent design put their chips on a vague, four-paragraph statement that said, essentially, nothing. The statement, the court case—all the hot air was a waste.

The decision was based on the palpably absurd and well-worn notion that teaching something, anything, about religion in a public school is "unconstitutional" and violates the "wall of separation between Church and State." Of course, it isn't the Constitution or the First Amendment that prohibits teaching religion in schools. The real prohibitive agent in these cases is the steamer trunk of erroneous case law cited by the judge and hoked up by anti-Christian, leftist courts that would have no power if the locals refused to abide them.

It is easy to sympathize with the parents of Dover who favor the teaching of intelligent design. They are rightly concerned about the anti-Christian gospel that schools pump into the minds of their children.

Yet whatever the merits of intelligent design, it is only the proximate legal reason why the good folks in Dover lost. Ultimately, they lost because public schools are officially atheist and anti-Christian; and leftist courts, controlled by leftist litigants, lawyers, and judges, will smite anyone promoting any doctrine that threatens their godless creed.

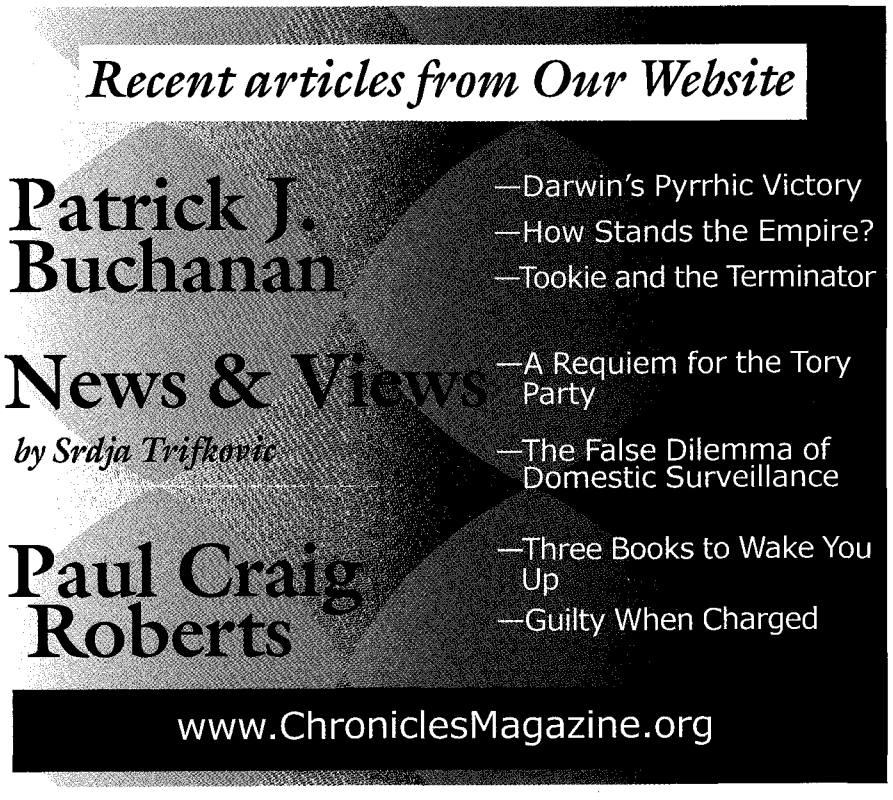
If the courts have one commandment, it is that Christians may not question curricula. So the court case in Delaware was not really a legal refutation of intelligent design; it was another slap at religion. Years ago, the cause was prayer at the morning bell. Now, it's "abstinence education" and intelligent design. For the unions and leftist lawyers and judges who run the schools, religion is the enemy. They fought to extirpate it, and they won. The battle is over. Yet even if these regnant powers could be dislodged, what would it matter? Public schools are uniformly atrocious. They are blighted educationally and noxious morally. Repeated surveys show that some teachers are illiterate. Forget about the honor rolls and kids who graduate with a "4.5." Taking control of public schools, particularly given the constant litigation such control would invite, would be a pyrrhic victory.

The evangelicals and supporters of intelligent design must give up this fight and every other one as well, from contraceptives and school prayer to dress codes and homosexuals at the prom. The only intelligent course is to pull their kids out of the public schools. Private Christian academies are everywhere. Parochial schools abound. Better yet, there is homeschooling. Indeed, any serious Christian knows that putting a child in public school is a grave sin, given the crippling, lowbrow academics and anti-Christian cultural toxins to which such children are exposed.

Until Christian parents learn that their future lies outside the public schools, they will only strengthen the anti-Christian leftists they want to dethrone. To defeat them, parents must deprive schools of the malleable minds required to propagate their anti-American, anti-Christian ideology.

That would be an intelligent design.

—R. Cort Kirkwood



EUGENE MCCARTHY, R.I.P. When famous people die, they are usually overpraised in fulsome superlatives, well meant but losing all proportion. I've complained about this before, and I try to resist the temptation. I'll try to resist it today; it won't be easy but respect for the man himself forbids exaggeration of his virtues. He wouldn't have welcomed compliments he didn't deserve; I'm not sure he relished even the ones he did deserve.

I barely knew of Gene McCarthy until he created a sensation by challenging Lyndon Johnson in the 1968 Democratic presidential primary in New Hampshire; he lost, but his strong showing against a sitting president stunned the country and caused Johnson to withdraw from the race a couple of weeks later.

McCarthy's theme was simple: The Vietnam War was a mistake. Suddenly, the antiwar movement had a major candidate, a liberal with an attractively conservative demeanor. Shaggy college students, getting "clean for Gene," got haircuts—hair was a big cultural issue in 1968—and adopted middle-class camouflage, including even neckties, in order to serve his cause among ordinary voters. "Working within the System," it was called. Opposition to the war no longer seemed subversive or radical.

No sooner had McCarthy shocked Johnson than Bobby Kennedy was emboldened to jump into the race; he and Johnson hated each other anyway. McCarthy regarded them both with cool contempt, but that was his problem: His cool, aloof personality wasn't to everyone's taste. Bobby had star power inherited from his assassinated brother, plus lots of money, with no inhibiting scruples. He pretty much muscled McCarthy out of the race, and it looked as if the contest for the nom-

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ination would be a duel between him and Hubert Humphrey.

Kennedy crushed McCarthy in the California primary, delivered his short victory speech, and went backstage, where Sirhan Sirhan was waiting for him. When Kennedy died early the next day, Humphrey's nomination was assured. In November, Richard Nixon narrowly beat him in a three-way race, George Wallace taking a fat chunk of the vote, while McCarthy seemed not to care who won. By 1980, he was favoring Ronald Reagan and heading in a libertarian direction.

I met McCarthy briefly in Minneapolis about that time and told him how much I'd admired him in 1968, something he no doubt heard thousands of times for the rest of his life. When I told him I was now writing for Bill Buckley's *National Review*, he smiled: "I've always thought Bill was playing poker with Monopoly money." It was the kind of gently barbed, slightly enigmatic witticism you'd expect from him.

I met him again in Baton Rouge a few years later, where I was supposed to debate him; but the debate turned into an all-out tribute from the moment he was introduced. Everyone remembered him as the hero of 1968. I could only join the roar of the crowd.

Earlier that day, he'd invited me to join him for breakfast, where we had a long conversation about that wonderful year. He recalled the dirty tricks of the Kennedy people; on the day of the California primary, they'd tried to scare voters with leaflets claiming he had a plan to bus blacks from Watts to Orange County. It was a preposterous lie, but there had been no time to rebut it. Bobby was even more cynical than I'd always thought! So much for Camelot. But that night he was murdered anyway, and McCarthy told me the story not with bitterness, but with something like amusement, ironic and philosophical. No wonder he'd gotten out of politics after his moment of glory.

Politics, I reflected, was a strange business for a man like Gene McCarthy to have been in at all. George Will has written of his "condescension" to the public, but I think his appeal was just the opposite of that: He never talked down to you, whether you were part of a cheering crowd or a companion at the breakfast table. He was that rare thing, a politician without bombast. After an hour with a man like that, you realize how inflated John McCain's "straight talk" really is.

So in Gene McCarthy's honor, I think it is enough to say that he spoke with intelligence and candor, he raised our expectations of politicians, and, once upon a time, he was there when we really needed him. No hyperbole is necessary. He is gone now, and it hurts.

—*Joe Sobran*

OBITER DICTA: The article above by Joe Sobran is reprinted by permission of the Griffin Internet Syndicate.

Our poetry this month is provided by **Robert Beum**, who resides in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Dr. Beum's poems and essays have appeared in the *Sewanee Review*, *National Review*, the *Christian Century*, *Prairie Schooner*, and the *Southwest Review*, among others. His most recent books are *Classic European Short Stories* and *Modern British Essayists*.

Our cover and interior art is provided by our designer, **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.

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by Thomas Fleming

Lost in Translation

In one of his earliest essays, Walker Percy expounded a theory of "Metaphor as Mistake," and it is true that many insights, not all of them metaphorical, can arise from misunderstanding or, as happens to me more frequently these days, mishearing what someone has said. A psychiatrist friend, back about 1970, told me of a new treatment he had read about for certain kinds of neurotics. The idea seemed brilliant: Treat the neurotics, all too often self-indulgent manipulators, by responding to the actual words they use, rather than to the intentions they are indirectly trying to convey.

Imagine, the next time your whining girlfriend, disappointed that you are not going to the most expensive place in town, says, "After all, maybe we really shouldn't go out tonight."

"Great. Go rustle up some grub, woman."

Or think how much fun it would be to respond directly to all the buried and half-dead metaphors in everyday American English, such as "You need to leap on the opportunity," or "Over my dead body," or "Give me a break."

More serious means may need to be applied to politicians who use words they do not understand. When Bill Clinton was pondering the meaning of *is*, he spoke of "parsing his sentences," as if *parse* meant something like "refine upon the meaning" or "use words with subtlety," when it means nothing more than to analyze the grammatical function of each word.

The malapropisms of President Bush have received wide attention from unfriendly critics in the leftist media, who hold him to a higher standard than they would ever apply to his rivals. Some of the President's more celebrated gaffes could have been uttered by anyone having a bad day, just as Jerry Ford's bumblings were nothing but the occasional misstep taken by the most athletic president of the 20th century. Some of George W. Bush's other utterances are merely the sign of the poor education that most people receive in fashionable universities, while still others, by far the most interesting, are an indication of a political mind taking refuge in equivocal clichés.

"Families is where our nation finds hope, where our wings take dream."

"Part of the facts is understanding we have a problem, and part of the facts is what you're going to do about it."

"Those who enter the country illegally violate the law."

These gaffes would be funny if George Bush were anyone but the Commander in Chief, and if the style were not so clearly the reflection of the man. Taken together, these Bushisms reveal a man who (in the first example) uses poetical language as a substitute for rational discourse and (in the second) cannot distinguish between a fact and an attitude or intention, or (in the third) between the law and his own opinion. What does he think he means when he declares that illegal immigration is against the law? Obviously, he means that illegal border crossings, so long as they are useful to someone, are not *really* against the law.

The President is hardly alone in his penchant for revealing malapropisms. Al Gore was similarly gifted, and most media pundits who despise the President are even more duplicitous in their abuse of the language. Dan Rather is legendary for his bewildering folksy metaphors, as in "When the going gets weird, anchormen punt." Thomas Friedman, the *New York Times* point man for disinformation, has gone beyond Rather, with such dreary nonsense as "And now the icing on the cake, the uber-steroid that makes it all mobile: wireless." Matt Taibbi (in the *New York Press*, December 14-20, 2005) is only the most trenchant of many reviewers who deride Friedman's "confused metaphorical/rhetorical constructions" that constitute "a veritable mountain range of idiocy." There is even a Tom Friedman mixed-metaphor contest somewhere on the internet.

But Friedman's vapidity and bad prose, so typical of the *New York Times*, are matched by veteran conservative commentators. In a column significantly entitled "It Can't Be Said in Simple Words," William F. Buckley, Jr., after characterizing the White House response to criticism as "silence," goes on to say, "The reaction to this Silence came to a boil . . ." The same column includes an illiterate Clintonism ("press chief McClellan attempted to preempt a parsing . . .") as well as this masterpiece of obfuscation: "What the administration appears to be resisting is endorsement of legislation that suffers from inbuilt rigidities that preclude the realities." What Mr. Buckley apparently meant to say is that the administration opposed any legislation that would tie the hands of the CIA in interrogating terrorists. By "inbuilt rigidities," he means the rule of law, and by "preclude the realities," he must be referring to a certain flexibility granted the CIA, which has the right to violate the laws of all nations and moral codes. Since no one can even conceivably preclude (that is, shut the door against) any reality, Mr. Buckley's reality is of a piece with Mr. Bush's facts: Both are subjective mental states that can only be analyzed by speech therapists and abnormal psychologists.

The bizarre speech of pundits and politicians reveals more than ignorance: Sloppy imagery, mixed metaphors, and confused syntax are indications of a mental disturbance that is somewhere between imbecility and dishonesty. However, the most acute form of the disease is to be observed not in presidential speeches or editorial columns but in academic books and journals, where Germanic noun clusters replace English syntax and the use of pseudotechnical jargon obscures the plain fact that some poor devil of an English professor has never been taught standard English. But, then, where would he learn it? Certainly not in an English class.

Now imagine a series of therapy sessions in which the patient had to experience literally and vividly all the malapropisms and mixed and inappropriate metaphors on which he relies in his neurotic campaign to evade reality. Imagine Friedman and Rather and Buckley and Harold Bloom enduring the Logo-katharsis treatment (my name). One part of it might be an unpleasant electric

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shock, to be applied in response to every mixed metaphor or duplicitous circumlocution. Food and water might be withheld from the patient until he learned to ask for them in polite, standard English. This procedure would be justified, according to modern medical ethics, on the grounds that most politicians, journalists, and professors, from their utterances, appear to be brain-dead.

Inspired by my own fantasy, I asked for the article, only to discover that I had misunderstood the psychiatrist's description of a perfectly banal approach to therapy, as likely to heal the mind as voodoo or Freudian analysis. I should have known.

My fantasy was based on a very ancient concept, that words have meanings, which, though they might not qualify as perfectly "objective," are related, nonetheless, to reality, which I define as "that which exists apart from my opinion." Confucius, when asked for advice on proper administration of government, replied that "what is necessary is to call things by their right names." Derided by a professional politician, Confucius explained, "If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success." Applying correct names is one of the highest human functions, and, although occultists may have made too much of it, naming the creatures is Adam's first action.

Using words properly, on a low level, is a manifestation of sincerity, but correct diction is also among the most serious tasks for the philosopher. Socrates and Plato tugged their disciples and antagonists through a cathartic process of discovering the true meaning of such words as *piety* and *courage*, and most of us today who take any interest in truth cut our teeth on the *Euthyphro* and *Laches*. Respect for the meaning of words is one of the things learned in studying classics, as Evelyn Waugh pointed out in his memoir, *A Little Learning*. Waugh's early education consisted almost exclusively of Greek, Latin, history, and mathematics. Little, alas, had stuck:

> Today I remember no Greek. I have never read Latin for pleasure and should be now hard put to it to compose a simple epitaph. But I do not regret my superficial classical studies. I believe that the conventional defense of them is valid; that only by them can a boy understand that a sentence is a logical construction and that words have basic inalienable meanings, departure from which is either conscious metaphor or inexcusable vulgarity. Those who have not been so taught—most Americans and most women—unless they are guided by some rare genius, betray their deprivation. The old-fashioned test of an English sentence—will it translate?—still stands after we have lost the trick of translation.

This, then, should be a primary goal of any serious education: to teach the students sufficient Latin and Greek for them to be able to test their English sentences and the thoughts behind them by translating them into Latin. A libertarian friend has told me many times that moral life comes down to freedom of choice, but how can a man be free to choose if he is not clear-headed enough to know what he is choosing? A dose of the classics might help. Not all classicists are honest men, but undisciplined minds (especially in this age of lies and mass media) hardly know the difference between truth and fiction, reality and theory. Walton Morris, who taught me Greek at the College of Charleston, used to recite a series of "Morris's Maxims," which were addressed to students who whined, as they floundered over a passage of Demosthenes or Livy, "I know what it means, I just can't put it into words." I can still recall the first three maxims:

> If you know it, you can say it.
> If you can't say it, you don't know it.
> If you can say it but cannot construe it (explain the grammar and syntax), you cheated.

Number three would have pleased Plato, who insisted that correct opinion was of limited value to a man who could not give a rational account of why it is correct.

Morris's Maxims assume a relationship between word and reality that would be doubted by some mystic visionaries and most postmodern philosophers, but when a mystic wishes to communicate his ineffable vision or a postmodern, the foolish conundrums he wishes to palm off as original profundity, he must fall back on words. Early on, the Greeks began using *logos* (speech, reason, *ratio*) to mean the organizing principle of the universe. When Saint John came to write the Fourth Gospel, he picked up the idea of the *logos* as naturally as Jefferson picked up the language of natural rights, but Saint John, in adopting the conventional language of Neoplatonists and Stoics, brought it to fulfillment, realizing that Christ Himself was the Light that irradiated the uncomprehending darkness.

For most of us, the search for truth consists in the attempt to make language and reality converge. Loss of precision in diction and grammar (as in the disappearing distinction between *shall* and *will*, *should* and *would*) entails a corresponding loss in our ability to discover and express what is true. In this respect, Noam Chomsky, whatever truth he might have uttered in his outspoken political tirades or in his convoluted defense of human freedom, worked an unspeakable evil in encouraging English teachers in the delusion that a language is simply the way some people talk at a certain time. Language, while not a science, is an art, like the rhetoric, logic, and poetry that arise from speech, and the clarity of Greek philosophy, from Parmenides to Aristotle, is inconceivable in any linguistic context but ancient Greek.

To this extent, the British analytical philosophers were on the right track, in analyzing the way people speak about reality. But even good British English of the early 20th century is a very limiting vehicle for expressing and analyzing propositions. The vocabulary of the postmodern United States—part Valley Girl, part Madison Avenue—is not sufficient to describe what I did on my summer vacation, much less to grapple with the meaning of *is*. Our stock of good words is diminishing each day. It is as if we were living in Godard's *Alphaville*, a computer-controlled society, where hotel rooms are furnished with a "Bible" that is really a dictionary from which seditious words (such as *love*) are continually being removed. The hero, not insignificantly, poses as a journalist working for *Figaro-Pravda*, and, as in our own world, the journalists are propagandists for the regime.

Alphaville, originally entitled *Tarzan* v. *IBM*, is often compared with *1984*, but neither the Marxist Godard nor the ex-Marxist Orwell could grapple with the fact that the proletarianization of modern languages is one of the principal tools being used to enslave the human mind. The dialogue of contemporary films and fiction, as much as blue jeans, dope, and hip-hop, degrades us all, not so much by its profanity as by its shoddiness. "It is easy," B.L. Gildersleeve once observed, "to sit in the seat of the scornful of nice grammatical distinctions," but, as he might have added, that seat is a dunce stool.

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The American Calendar
by Robert Beum

Thirty illnesses hath September;
Dental Health Week, you remember,
Overlaps with late November
Healthy Heart Month, and December
Brings you Hope For Cancer; June—
Otherwise Asthma Awareness—soon
Yields to Acne Research (July);
All the rest, except for Eye
Safety (April) won't be done
Until they've brought you thirty-one.

THE CONSERVATIVE BOOKSHELF

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

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—**Samuel Francis**

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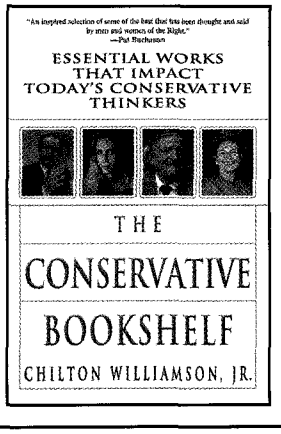
—**Clyde Wilson**



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Witness by Whittaker Chambers
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by Joseph Sobran

Conservatism's Ancient Mariner

In November 2005, Bill Buckley observed his 80th birthday, and his magazine, *National Review*, its 50th. Both anniversaries were rather fulsomely saluted, George Will remarking that, thanks to Buckley and his magazine, the phrase "conservative intellectuals" had "ceased to be an oxymoron."

Will's comment was apt, but in a way he didn't intend. *Oxymoron* is indeed the sort of fancy word Buckley is notable for popularizing, but he has consistently misused it and has taught others to do likewise. An oxymoron is not simply a contradiction in terms, as such intellectuals (including Rush Limbaugh) suppose, but a rhetorical figure, combining contradictory or opposite terms for deliberately paradoxical effect—"poorly rich," "living death," or "captive victor," to use three examples conservative intellectuals may recall from *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Having worked for Buckley at *National Review* for 21 years, I came to realize, with some embarrassment, that I could not define what he, and it, stood for. Neither could his liberal enemies, really; they might at one time (before he charmed them all to death) call him a "right-wing extremist," but it was hard to say what he represented the extreme *of*. He just isn't an extreme sort of fellow, and never has been. He's been called a pseudointellectual, but it would be nearer the mark, and maybe nicer, to say that he has been a pseudoextremist. Despite all the famous mannerisms and affectations that may purposely suggest eccentricity—those big words, the strangely unregional accent, the yachts and harpsichords—he has been, in all things, moderate.

Maybe Buckley appeared extreme to liberals in 1955: men of good hope, such as Norman Cousins, who believed in the United Nations, deplored "McCarthyism," fretted about nuclear testing, revered Gandhi, and saw Sweden as the inspiring Middle Way. Buckley made fun of all these things, which seemed insolent and anarchic at the time; and before that, in college, he had been called "the most dangerous undergraduate Yale has seen in years." Yes, dangerous! It didn't take much to terrify liberals in those days. Buckley made fun of their fears as well as their pieties. And fun it was. He brought not just clever wit to political punditry but something more unusual as well: real humor. The almost total disappearance of hilarity from his later writing can only mystify anyone who remembers his early work.

But though he defended Joe McCarthy, the segregated South, and a few other unfashionable causes, Buckley said hardly anything that sounds extreme now. At his best—and it's easy to forget, now, how amusing his best could be—he opposed liberal naiveté with witty common sense. But there wasn't much specific content in his conservatism, no doctrine you could identify as Buckleyism. By the same token, there is no such thing as anti-Buckleyism. If he's no longer controversial, it may be because he never really was.

What was he for? Anticommunism, capitalism, and Catholicism, in a general way; but his style, beyond a certain point, was strategically vague. He attracted people who favored any or all these things, but he often disappointed them by being unwilling to take these principles to their logical conclusions. Some of these people found him a compromiser and turned against him; his response, after every falling out, was to play the moderate. The other guy had flipped out, gone to "the fever swamps" (another phrase he popularized), whether it was Garry Wills on the left or his brother-in-law Brent Bozell on the right. Always, it seemed, the other guy was, well, extreme—that is, *too* principled. Few men have tried to make so many old friends look bad.

In my own case, Buckley suggested that the problem was my health, "physical and mental." The real problem, though, wasn't a disagreement; it was an agreement—an agreement he didn't want to acknowledge. Starting in 1982, when my two sons were approaching draft age, I saw that our neoconservative friends were itching for war with the Arabs, and I started writing about this in my syndicated column. I argued that the U.S.-Israeli alliance could only mean trouble for this country.

The same theme had often been sounded in *National Review*, back when James Burnham had written its foreign-policy editorials. But times had changed, I soon learned. Bill tried to shoo me off the subject; later, I learned that he had been threatened by Norman Podhoretz, then editor of *Commentary*, who accused me of "antisemitism" and demanded that I be fired. Buckley wouldn't go that far, but he did keep pressuring me, and Podhoretz later told the *Jerusalem Post* that he had, in effect, made Buckley shut me up. Meanwhile, he and his wife, Midge Decter, both ascribed my criticism of the Jewish state to antisemitism. This was in 1986, more or less midway between their similar charges against Russell Kirk and Pat Buchanan. When you pipe up against Israel or the neocons, it's never long before you start hearing the words "antisemitism," "holocaust," and "genocide." Mother Podhoretz said that such views as mine had "led to the Holocaust."

It's an old story, now, but I finally took the pressure off both Bill and me in 1993 by quitting *National Review*—or more precisely, getting myself fired, by describing in a column the pressures he had put on me and saying he was "jumpy about Jews" (an understatement). Bullied by Podhoretz, Buckley had made a journalistic innovation George Will's tribute neglected to mention: He had given the editor of another publication a veto over the contents of his own magazine.

Today, the actual content of Bill Buckley's conservatism has finally become clear: neoconservatism. If *National Review* is still distinguishable from neocon organs like the *Weekly Standard*, you couldn't prove it by me.

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Mind Your Language!

A Sea of Ruined Words

by James O. Tate

One of the fascinations of language, and one of the charms of the English language in particular, is the playful resourcefulness, the lexical richness, and the ambiguous suggestiveness of words themselves. And as the English language is the most agglomerative of them all, we are constantly aware of new vocabulary and usage, some of which must be rejected. The track of "new" words is charted in the best dictionaries, so that we can see something about such established and unobtrusive exoticisms or old new words as *assassin*, *tangerine*, and *ketchup* and understand exactly what we are saying when we say those words, and how long we have been saying them. I must point out that my three examples are not abstractions, so that they preserve some precision inherently. Language is evolutionary, semantics drift, stuff happens. That goes with the territory—it is inherent in our nature and in the nature of language. We do not want, or should not want, language to be too orderly or utopian, as in some positivist fantasy of a one-to-one correspondence of word and thing or of signifier and signified. The discourse of spiritual reflection or of poetry, the elbow room for humor, would be reduced or impossible in such a condition.

But, of course, that fantasy has been entertained by philosophers and sages over the years, only some few of whom deserve much attention or respect. The story of the Académie Française is well known; that of the Italian analogue, less so. Recently, the Brazilian constituents of the regnant Portuguese authority won a power struggle by the weight of their numbers and are now the masters of the Portuguese tongue—and they sanction all those Brazilian neologisms and solecisms and slang that the Old World fogies had discountenanced. Surely, such a story is linguistically familiar and even predictable.

The more we know about language, the more we know about change, but the changes seem to go in one direction. Even the language of criminals, as we know it from 400 or 200 or 100 years ago, seems quaint today, and not only quaint—it seems dignified and admirable. A highwayman or stick-up artist used to say such things as "Stand and deliver!" or "Your money or your life!" or even "Stick 'em up!" What they say today is unprintable except in a Hollywood screenplay.

The phenomenon of linguistic entropy has drawn the attention of some of the greatest writers in the history of our language, including Dryden, Swift, Pope, and Johnson, to name but four. Swift was no positivist, but he proposed an Academy to police the English tongue, as did Defoe, and Johnson produced his Dictionary, which is nothing if it is not authoritative, or idiosyncratically authoritarian. Swift and Pope in particular, in masterpieces of imaginative projection and mordant irony too well known to cite, showed the consequences of verbal deformation and its human and political implications. And that was in the good old days.

Today, I would be the last to recommend any established authority over our language, and for several reasons. One: Without Swift and Johnson, even the idea seems silly. Two: An English Academy would likely be equal in quality to the rest of our institutions. Three: The manifest failure of the American educational system does not suggest any success for utopian projects. Four: The organs of communication are devoted to the destruction of "standard English." Five: Until English is reestablished as the national language, any such project would be wishful thinking.

But not having an Academy does not mean that we do not have any authorities, or that the editors of dictionaries do not sanction the abuse of words, particularly in the political arena or the zone of public debate. The authority today is not an individual genius like a Jonathan Swift or a Samuel Johnson but a faceless pack of credentialed poseurs who adjust the language to fit the latest rage or fashion or imposture or abuse. We can sense the presence and the pressure of illegitimate authority when the clerisy suddenly is of one mind about contentious issues, and when, therefore, the language has to be distorted to justify an analogous deformation of morals or politics or forms. And, above all, we sense the presence and the pressure of willful distortion when the tone of modern skepticism bizarrely, even violently, swivels to its opposite: the tone of reverential unction and pompous sanctimony. And let me add that this mawkishly elevated tone is invariably found in connection with disagreeable causes, and add further that this tone also signifies that an abstraction has been twisted from its base.

Back during the contested election of 2000, that unremarkable politician Al Gore was heard to intone operatically the phrase "our democracy" as a sort of mantra; it was a kind of music that referred to his own selfish interest but presented it as a noble cause—our cause. Yet, to what was he referring? The word *democracy* is not mentioned in our founding documents. We do not live in a democracy, as Al knows perfectly well after a life of privilege, after all those years of "fundraising" or solicitations of bribes, after all the lying that he has done, and after he translated the phrase *E pluribus unum* to mean the opposite of what its elementary Latin denotes. Add to that, Al managed to discuss the election of 2000 without mentioning the Electoral College, that superb antidemocratic instrument established by the antidemocratic authors of the Constitution, as though the election were a mere plebiscite. And indeed, in a painful and prophetic moment, Ross Perot had, not many years before, pro-

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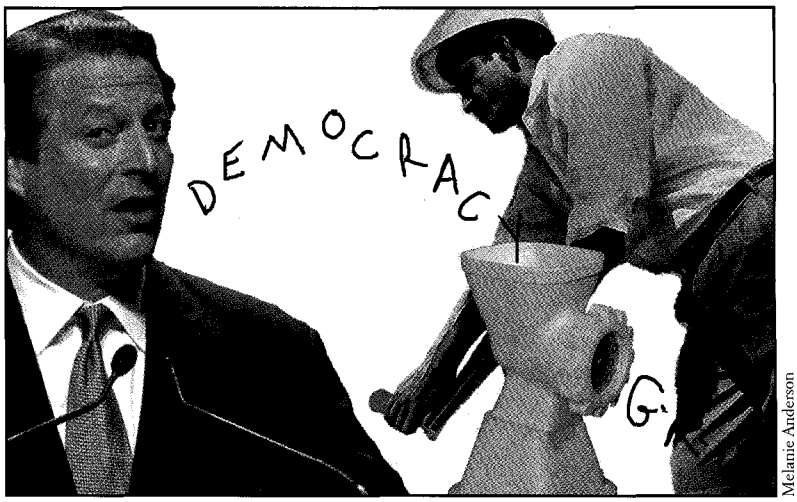
posed national instant plebiscites boosted by computers as a new method of decisionmaking. How revealing it is that the politicians cannot refer even to the simplest processes without fudging and hedging about forms and words! Did Ross never read the Constitution or understand the delegation of authority or the principle of representative government in a federal republic? He seems to have believed that polls actually have some substantive meaning.

No, we do not live in a "democracy," nor should we wish to. The term comes to us from the Greeks and from Aristotle, who used it invidiously to mean the degeneration of "polity," or true politics in a real community; and he insisted, because he had evidence, that democracy would lead to civil war and then to tyranny. The "mixed constitution" that he advocated is quite similar to the one that we have, or had before the prevaricators and equivocators got to it—a system of countervailing powers that is designed to last. The word *democracy* means a lot in our day—I mean, it makes a lot of music—but it does *not* mean what it denotes, the rule by the *demos* or common people. Because 200 years of abuse and propaganda take their toll, the word *democracy* should be confined to classes in political theory and discussions of Aristotle. Used in any other way, the word seems to be a noise like the growl of a dog—one connoting hostility, a warning of trouble, *etc.* We have come to hear "democracy" routinely cited as a *casus belli* in the Middle East—one listed alongside instruments of mass destruction that no one has been able to find. The situation is bizarre: The Iraqis are supposed to develop what they have never had, but Aristotle always referred to the results of past practice and to historical experience. *Democracy* does *not* denote, though it is being used to mean or connote musically, "a friendly government that we install," or "secular government, in an area of large oil deposits and Islamic fanaticism," or "a government that includes humans with utera and glands of lactation in military decisionmaking." Nor does it mean "emasculated satrapy," though that might well be the preferred, accurate, or honest term.

So the word *democracy*, so loved by the thoughtful and concerned, seems to be a source of confusion—and that is why it is loved. It is a word to watch out for, like "Brooklyn Bridge" coming from a "salesman." People do have common sense, however, and, if you observe, they are often highly undemocratic in their behavior, values, and decisions. They like to make their own judgments about priorities. They want elite advice and service when it comes to investments, real estate, jet flights, heart surgery, *etc.* No one ever says that the *corps de ballet* should be a bunch of clumsy slobs, or that the short stop for the Dodgers should not be keen of eye and fleet of foot. But when we raise the level of abstraction, good sense goes out the window—and that is precisely why we raise the level of abstraction.

Democracy is not the only ruined and ruinous word, of course. There are too many others that are the signs, or rather the noises, of impending fraud, violence, or deceit. *Feminism* is one of these. Now you and I know something about the history of this word, its roots in the 18th century, its literature in the 19th century in its heroic age, and the suffrage of women in the 20th century. The meaning of *feminism* seems to have been rather clear for many decades. Yet I came to doubt that this was so when I was called a "feminist" by a feminist. What did that mean? It meant that I had done something "supportive" for a female of surpassing gifts because I recognized her talent and her need. But that hardly made me a saloon-wrecking temperance advocate or a bra-burning nutcase. Yet so I was called, because words, especially political words, are routinely used without precision, without respect, and even, as in my case, without identifiable meaning. Recently, like *democracy*, *feminism* has been used many times to justify war in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and this by "conservatives." To reform a country's politics by violence is a tall order when it goes against the established culture, but since MacArthur did it in Japan after the dropping of two atomic bombs on civilians who were for once, apparently, *not* "innocent," "feminism" has taken the place of "freedom of the seas" as a *casus belli*. This suggests that there has always been something corrupt about the word *feminism*, and that it relates not to advocacy of the oppressed but to lust for power. Though *feminism* is supposed to be "democratic," it actually is not, because it has already established a series of reserved powers, quota systems, judicial seats, special issues, and many other privileges that make it inherently an obstacle to civil discourse, to rational discussion, to precision of language, and, above all, to the election of excellence.



Melanie Anderson

So while I have the opportunity (and I wish to thank the humans of the male "gender" who offered it to me), I believe it would be a service to culture and general knowledge as well as vital for the national interest if I continued my discourse on the noise, rather than the "meaning," of words. And in that spirit, I do not find any lack of occasions, offenses, or examples. Having left off with *feminism*, we can glance at such grotesque formulations as "reproductive rights," which does not mean what it apparently says but is, rather, a gnostic claim to the right of women to kill their own children, and one which is unquestionable, a universal human right, one that is protected by the Constitution, which protects it absolutely by never mentioning it. The related euphemism, or willfully misleading construction, "pro-choice," is offset by the equally political "pro-life," which suggests that "pro-choice" means "pro-death," and for some reason. But a living child is not the common noun or even abstraction "life," and, if that child is a "choice," then she is something less than a human creature.

Running rapidly along, we find so many examples of noise and bluster and blather that I hardly know which to take up

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next. Sheer irritation (and, by the way, *aggravation* does not mean "irritation," though it is used so often that it has come to "mean" what it does not "say" etymologically)—irritation, as I say, suggests a look at the word *racism*, which is rarely used correctly and precisely. Let us begin with what *racism* does not mean. It does not mean "something I don't like"—for that, we have the expression "Ugh." It does not mean "any form of ethnocentrism or xenophobia," for such limitations are integral to culture and identity in the anthropological sense. Tribal identity is not an "ism." So what does *racism* mean? It would seem to apply most properly to basically 19th-century claims to a racial basis for civilization, claims which amount to an unscientific ideology, as, for example, from Count Gobineau and others. That brings us back to what *racism* does not mean, and I can be exact about the point. *Racism* does *not* mean that, when a hurricane named after a person of the female sex inundates the most culturally distinctive as well as the most ill-situated major urban area in the United States, and when, as a result, many people of color and some of none were unable or unwilling to leave that urban area, and when buses failed to arrive in a timely fashion to transport said persons, that we had a manifest demonstration of racism and even institutional racism at the city, state, and federal levels. No, *racism* does not mean that, though people keep saying it does.

Consider also the related term *discrimination*, which has been badly bent by the phrase "racial discrimination." Nowadays, many or even most seem to think that *discrimination* is a pejorative word, when, in truth, it is a term of approbation, as in the sentence, "He is a most discriminating person." "Discrimination" means informed and deliberate choice, and so involves judgment. This would suggest that "judgment" is also bad, and so we get the term *judgmental*, which means little but "bad." But if we cannot choose or judge, then to whom do we concede those powers?

Fascism, being historically grounded, should be a word that we can use precisely, but we rarely encounter it that way. It has degenerated into a vague term of abuse, meaning roughly "Booooo!" *Fascism* is usually used to reject authority by people who prefer chaos, and that is a shame, because the etymology of that word is revealing, and because the image of the fasces appears on the walls of the Capitol and on the back of the Roosevelt dime. There have been some discreet adjustments of the images of our inheritance, which must have been too Western, womanless, and white for "our democracy."

Such historical erasure brings us inevitably to the master words of power of our time, *multiculturalism* and *diversity*. I say that *multiculturalism* is a relatively straightforward term as such manipulations go—it is an open admission in itself that "assimilation" is over and an announcement that the United States does not have a culture to be respected. *Diversity* is more deceptive, and strains against its own derivation. It is a deception concerning social engineering, curricular destruction, racial quotas, and much else that has been incisively analyzed by Peter Wood in his *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept* (2003). Recommending your attention to his thorough treatment, I have to think of much-abused words such as *equality* and *education*, and I can only close by invoking the names of Jonathan Swift and George Orwell, who set unforgettable examples for precision of language and devotion to truth—examples that are instructive and helpful even today. ◁©

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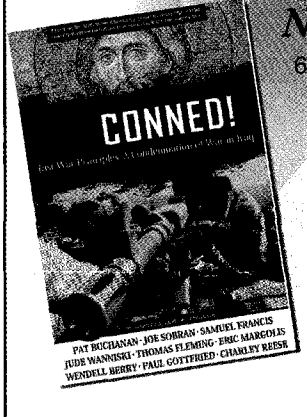
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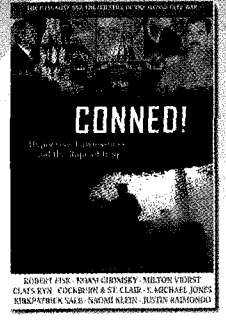

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Manners, Morals, Language

Forsaking the *Beau-Ideal*

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Melanie Anderson

Excepting deconstructionists, who believe there really is no such thing to begin with, most people who are at all conscious of language are in agreement that it exists in degraded form today. Similarly, those who do not make a point of being self-consciously "of the people" (as the British used to say), or do not believe vulgar language to be a mark of honesty and authenticity, concur that manners have sunk to a state of corruption unheard of, apparently, since the invention of writing, no record having come down to us from so deep a deportmental abyss. (In the cave paintings of Lascaux, families seated about their cookfires in backward baseball caps to eat their evening meal are not depicted.) The critics who deplore the decline of language, and those who decry the decay in manners, are not, however, always—or even ordinarily—the same people; nor are the double phenomena typically presented as being somehow connected except in the most general sense, as in the collapse of civilization overall. And yet it seems reasonable and even obvious, when we think about it, that behaving properly means thinking properly, and that thinking properly is a matter of understanding and, even more, respecting the language we think in—in which we can *only* think and, therefore, *must* think.

There is, first, the empirically verifiable fact that carelessness in any single aspect of human address leads to, if it does not originally reflect, carelessness in others as well. Carelessness in language as in manners, unlike deliberate sloppiness—a form of behavior whose price is eternal perverse vigilance on behalf of its slovenly credo—is an habitual thing, and habit cannot be compartmentalized in anyone's mind. But there are more specific connections as well between the destruction of manners and the destruction of morals than the general civilizational connection or that of simple habit, links that have to do with the particular nature of language, on the one hand, and manners, on the other. And these connections, once made, explain the existence of another element in the dual relationship that we see now as a triangular one: that of morals and morality.

If correct behavior depends on right thinking, and right thinking on the right use of language, then we may say that, in terms of active influence, the sequence actually proceeds the other way: Language > thought > behavior. (Though action *may*, in some instances, influence thought—more likely, rethought—it seems a stretch to try to imagine behavior leading to a rethinking of language itself.)

Before we know how properly to act—that is, what sort of action suits us as human beings—we have to know what we truly *are*, what our human nature *is*. The only way to gain such knowledge lies in thought and reflection, activities made possible only by the medium of those designative symbols we call words, amounting collectively to language. But language, as the instrument of human thought, is an effective instrument only when it is an instrument honestly employed. And honest usage, in language, means using words as they were intended to be used—that is, as they are commonly understood to be used—and using them in no other way. Further, it means arranging words in patterns that conform to a commonly accepted logic, and not logic in some eccentric or private form. In all matters of language, as in those involving money, we need to recognize that "honestly" implies "carefully," even if careless-

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Chilton Williamson, Jr., is Chronicles' *senior editor for books and the author, most recently, of* The Hundredth Meridian: Seasons and Travels in the New Old West, *published by Chronicles Press.*

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ness in speech and writing does not carry with it the penalties incurred where dollars and cents are concerned (though, rightfully, it would entail sanctions more draconian still).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That proposition is a foundational one for our civilization; yet it is our own civilization that, after hugging the divine Truth to its bosom for 18 centuries, has devoted the last three to trying to get round Truth by whatever means at hand or devisable, however false. The reason is not that it lost the ability to see Truth, but rather that it no longer *wished* to apprehend Truth, had no use for Truth, and hoped Truth could be made to go away by denying or simply ignoring It. The historic Will To Believe was replaced by the Will Not To. And so the attempt was, and remains, a dishonest thing: the dishonest use of words to deny the one Word that has always refused to be used dishonestly. No other civilization has ever dreamt of attempting such a thing, including that of the ancient Jews who disobeyed or, at worst, defied their God, without ever denying Him (though, when He came at last, they *did* refuse to recognize Him). After the Fall, the worst violence done himself by man is to deny the Truth of the Word—and, by implication and descent, all words and their inherently divine relationship with one another.

Throughout the length and breadth of recorded history, other, non-Western civilizations have developed more or less exquisite deportmental forms. It is doubtful, however, that any sort of gentleman has ever existed other than the Christian Gentleman. The case, it seems, is one of "breeding will out," as the English used to say.

This is because man cannot, through his abuse of words, distort the concept of the divine Nature without distorting his understanding of human nature along with it, as Orwell and other critics of the enemies of language have understood. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . ." According to the Word, man is a kind of copy, however faint and imperfect, of God. But if the Word does not exist, then God does not exist, and what, then, is man a copy of, in God's absence? The problem is, all language is constructed according to a logic that assumes the existence of God and a divine relationship with man: God, in other words, is structured into human language, because He is encoded in the human mind and in human thought. To refuse to know Who God is, is to refuse to accept what we are and how we are meant to act in the world, how we are intended to comport ourselves, how we are expected to behave, in respect of ourselves as well as of others. In the degree that men deny the reality and integrity of language, they reject the idea of Model-Modeler and Modeled, and with it the possibility for the coherent and respectful human activity and behavior they once called decency and manners.

Jesus the Christ has been presented for two millennia as the model for nearly every sort of goodness and virtue: charity, compassion, forgiveness, large-mindedness, honesty, truthfulness, chastity, bravery, fortitude, *etc.* Somehow, even His greatest admirers, His most devoted followers, never get around to recommending Him to us as the paragon of manners, meaning that everything that He ever did or said was exactly appropriate to both the company and the situation in which the Son of Man and Creator of the world discovered Himself at any given moment in His life. The Lord dressed well but unostentatiously, not at all like a liberation theologian or even John the Baptist, the opposite also of both Carlyle's Dandy and King Herod. His voice and manner were exquisitely keyed to what He had to say at the instant He needed to say it: never "meek and mild" but, by turns, gracious (the Samaritan woman at the well), stern (the woman with the issue of blood), fierce (the Pharisees), dignified in restraint (the interview with Pilate), grateful (the Good Thief). He appreciated (but did not, standing upon His dignity, demand) good manners shown to Himself (the six lepers), yet knew how to accept not manners alone but special favors graciously (the prostitute with the vial of nard). Christ, in short, remained always Himself, while leaving others unconstrained to be comfortable and at ease as *themselves*: the epitome of good manners, as manners were to become progressively codified in the West, according, in turn, to the ideals of the Gentil and Parfait Knight, the Renaissance Courtier, and, lastly, the English Gentleman, who is really one and the same thing as the Christian Gentleman.

Throughout the length and breadth of recorded history, other, non-Western civilizations have developed more or less exquisite deportmental forms, from the coffee-drinking ceremonials of the Bedouin in their desert tents to the elaborate formalities of Mandarin China and Shinto Japan, and with these their own masculine ideal. It is doubtful, however, that any sort of gentleman has ever existed other than the Christian Gentleman. The case, it seems, is one of "breeding will out," as the English used to say. The Christian Gentleman (and his lady) can be and indeed have been aped, just as "American" marriages replete with white gowns and veils for the bride and a tailcoat for the groom, a "chapel" with flowers, benefit of "clergy," a rented limousine, and a lavish wedding reception following the ceremony are presently being aped by the Japanese. But it was always, quite literally, a case of the spirit being absent from the hollow form. The Christian Gentleman was what he was for the very good reason that he understood himself to be a direct descendent of the first Christian Gentleman, Who was no other than Christ Himself. Quite unlike the 18th- and 20th-century dandy (for whom he has, at times, been mistaken), the Christian Gentleman was, whether consciously or not, engaged in an Imitation of Christ, of His manners and spirit rather than His clothes. The Christian Gentleman could not be faked, therefore, except perhaps by would-be Christian Gentlemen, who, as they were both imitating the Common Model, were hardly fakes at all but rather co-imitators. The postclassical West never had any other mod-

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el for behavior than its *beau-ideal*, the Christian Gentleman, at all. Consequently, when the West abandoned Christianity as its civilizational form, the Christian Gentleman *as* ideal stumbled on for a few generations, futilely and hopelessly faking himself (and this time he really *was* faking), until, at last, in his blindness and disorientation, he fell off the edge of the world, somewhere in the vicinity of La Jolla, California.

Manners, like language and the civilization they help to create, are essentially a matter of form. And here form, as it always does, implies hierarchy. The idea of the gentleman, as much as the idea of the aristocrat, is a hierarchical idea, the product of a developed sense of dignity and formality. It is an error of levelers, egalitarians, and democratists, however, to suppose that hierarchy confers dignity upon members of the gentlemanly class alone, while excluding the orders below it from the secure and protective structure afforded by the formalized social order. On the contrary: In hierarchical society, each order, from the highest to the lowest, enjoys the dignity proper to its station, a dignity assured by the formality that gave rise to it in the first place. Both the dignity and the formality are conveyed and preserved by the reciprocal system of manners that, in a healthy society, respects this system by embodying and expressing formality and dignity.

Last year, readers of the *New York Times* were subjected to a serialized sociological dissertation, spread from end to end of the first section of the newspaper over a period of days, whose appalled conclusion was: There *is* such a thing as class in America! (*Q.E.D.*, one suspects.) The *Times*' presentation was considerably exaggerated and satisfactorily dramatized by its misidentification of simple inequality with a class system, and by the authors' confusion of economic status with social class. The Founding Fathers, the series implied, abhorring inequality and class distinctions alike, would be scandalized to witness the subsequent perversion of the American dream (a fantasy the *Times* seems to believe is traceable from the founding era) in our own unhappy time.

In fact, anyone with the scrappiest working knowledge of American history knows that the American founders were staunch defenders of inequality and class stratification. The point to be taken here, though, is that true class systems are always signified and expressed by differences in the language (both written and spoken), manners, and morals of their component classes. Throughout history, until almost the day before yesterday, the upper classes spoke, cogitated and wrote, and comported themselves on a level so far above those below them as to constitute, almost, a different species, or subspecies. Nowadays, of course, these distinctions between the "classes" have disappeared nearly to the vanishing point. Rich, upper-middle-, middle-, lower-middle-, and lower-class people in general speak, think, dress, and behave alike. Reading much the same "matter," watching the same movies and TV shows, listening to the same music, holding the same opinions (those relating to economic and political interest excepted), wearing the same clothes, ignorant of formal (or even good) manners, following the same moral codes in business, sex, and everything else, we are all of us, now, "of the people."

I am sorry to have to conclude that the *Times*, not for the first time in its history, is simply wrong. We do not enjoy the innumerable, immeasurable—in truth, God-given—benefits of a class system in America. Our language, manners, and morals are irrefutable testimony to the contrary. ◁©

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A Trip to Smart-Mouth College

The Loss of Sacred Words

by Aaron D. Wolf

"If the King James Bible was good enough for the Apostle Paul, it's good enough for me!"

Over the years, there have been many errors identified in the various printings of the so-called Authorized Version (it was never officially "authorized" by anyone) of the Bible, the most beloved translation of the Scriptures into English. H.A. Scrivener put the number at 1,500. Some of these errors produced humorous (and occasionally scandalous) results. The very first edition of the King James Version became known as the "He Bible," because, in the third chapter of Ruth, after she lies down at the feet of Boaz, the printers incorrectly set into type the phrase, "and he went into the city," when, according to context, it was obviously Ruth. The "Wicked Bible" of 1631 was a printing of the KJV that included the presciently modern commandment, "Thou shalt commit adultery." After this, a certain Mr. Barker no longer served as the king's printer and was fined 300 pounds.

Considering such errata alone, it is easy to scoff at the reactionary subset of fundamentalists who hold, essentially, to the view that the great 1611 translation of the Bible is itself God-breathed. This tiny group numbers itself among those who wear the label "King James Only," though most "KJVO"-types do not subscribe to the theory that, by some miracle, the Hebrew patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob spoke in that tongue of angels known as Elizabethan English.

Most KJVO fundamentalists reject the modern English translations of the Bible because such translations are based on a different set or family of Greek manuscripts (what is loosely called the Alexandrian tradition); the King James Version comes from the vast Byzantine tradition, from which Erasmus compiled his *Novum Testamentum*, which later came to be known as the *Textus Receptus*.

Use of the King James Version (and the concomitant fierce rejection of the New International Version, NIV) serves as a litmus test for many fundamentalists, almost a sixth "fundamental." It is not uncommon to see the words "A King James Church" in small letters splashed next to the name of the church on the sign out front, though the appearance of the name of the Jacobite monarch on the side of a Baptist church seems strange when one considers the political machinations at the Hampton Court debates that led Old Six-and-One to consent to the Puritans' demand for a new English translation; or if one considers Erasmus himself, who longed to publish a paraphrase version of the entire Bible.

Unlike the fundamentalists, most American and British biblical scholars, and the evangelicals and conservative Mainline Christians who rely on them, insist on using the more modern translations of the Bible, based on the Alexandrian tradition, which pays homage to the "two most reliable manuscripts," as in the common footnote in Bible commentaries: "The two most reliable manuscripts omit . . . " The authorities of the Alexandrian family, which omit several key passages that are included in the Byzantine tradition (and, thus, the KJV) are *Codex Vaticanus* (belonging to the Vatican library, it dates to the fourth century and is believed to be the oldest complete copy of the Bible in Greek), and *Codex Sinaiticus* (discovered at a monastery on Mount Sinai in 1844 by Constantine Tischendorf, this mid-fourth-century codex contains a great portion of the Old Testament and the entire New Testament, plus the Epistle of Barnabas and part of the Shepherd of Hermas).

Each one of the flurry of English Bible translations that began in the 1940's has been based on a critical edition of the Alexandrian tradition. What this means, practically, is that a passage such as the ending of St. Mark's Gospel is flanked by a footnote that indicates that (per the New International Version, for example) "the most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20." In a way, this is handy, because it casts doubt on a couple of thorny verses, including "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (which implies baptismal regeneration) and "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (the proof-text beloved by the snake handlers of Appalachia).

On a deeper level, however, this scientific treatment of Holy Writ serves to cast doubt on the authority of the Bible. After all, whose Bible is it? Christians agree that the Bible is God's Word, but who has the authority to say what is the Bible and what is not—the Church or the textual critic (liberal or conservative)?

The Church, East and West, Protestant and Catholic, read such passages as Mark 16:9-20 as the Gospel truth for at least 1,500 years. The Fathers cite it (see, for example, Saint Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III:10:6). Jerome has it in his Vulgate. Luther renders it in his *Deutsche Bibel*; and, perhaps most significantly, it is contained in the living tradition of the Orthodox Church, the very source of the thousands of extant Greek manuscripts that form the Byzantine text, which date from the 6th to the 15th centuries.

The Church's Bible (the Byzantine text is often called the "Ecclesiastical Text") fell out of favor among scholars during the late-19th century, after the publication of B. Westcott and F. Hort's critical edition of the Greek New Testament. They relied heavily on the Alexandrian tradition, because of its antiquity, and specifically on *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*. Their method of omitting words, phrases, and some large swaths of the received text of the New Testament if they did not appear in the "two oldest manuscripts" placed the Scriptures on the same plane as any other ancient document. On some level, this seems reasonable: The principle *lectio difficilior potior* ("The harder reading is stronger"), taken abstractly, makes sense. Copyists might indeed be more inclined to smooth out the rough edges of a difficult phrase or sentence for the sake of readability; conversely, then, a more difficult reading could perhaps be closer to the original. And, again in the abstract, one might therefore con-

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clude that, for example, this explains why the "two oldest manuscripts" omit the so-called Johannine Comma (I John 5:7-8). The King James Version translates that passage, from the Ecclesiastical Text, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." By contrast, the New International Version, relying on the "oldest manuscripts," has "For there are three that testify: [here, verse 8 begins abruptly] the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement."

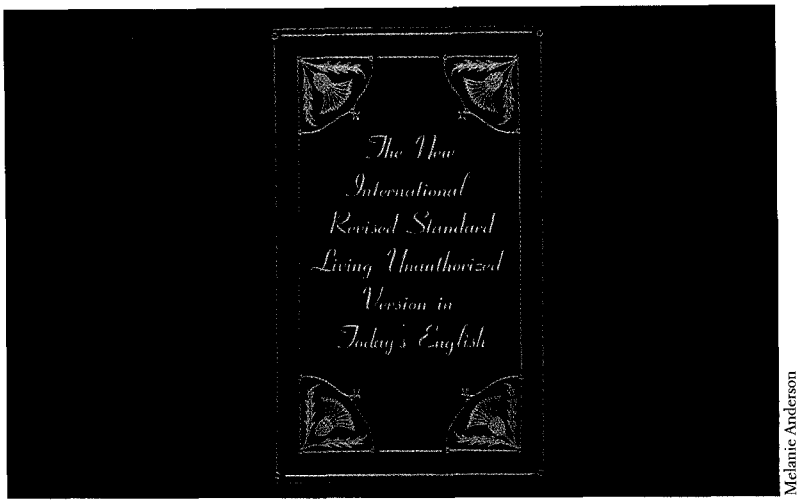
The problem is, we cannot consider the Scriptures abstractly. The words, the language, are holy, arising out of a living tradition. Science has no place explaining that which is holy, be it the First Article of the Apostles' Creed (the Creation) or the presumed foolishness of Church Fathers, bishops, and liturgists who sang the divine Word for centuries, blissfully unaware of the future discovery of Tischendorf or the scholarship of B. Westcott and F. Hort.

Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox might disagree on the exact *locus* of the preserved Word of God, but they used to agree that the Holy Ghost had, indeed, performed the act of preservation down through the centuries. The Presbyterians' Westminster Confession, for example, puts it this way:

> The Old Testament in Hebrew, which was the native language of the people of God of old, and the New Testament in Greek, which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations, being immediately inspired by God and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.

Today, the notion that the Holy Ghost has "kept pure in all ages" the sacred Scriptures has yielded to the power of modern textual criticism, infusing each new generation with the hubristic notion that the Bible comes to the individual out of thin air, or at least out of two admittedly ancient manuscripts unknown to the worshiping, confessing Church for centuries. How far would these critics be willing to go if additional, even older manuscripts were discovered, indicating that the third chapter of Saint John's Gospel only contained three verses, or that Saint Luke's Gospel did not include the Resurrection narrative? Or would they then appeal to citations in the Church Fathers, whom they currently reject in favor of the "two oldest manuscripts"?

The notion that the Bible belongs not to the Church but to the "neutral" scholar is reflected in the plethora of modern English translations, which prefer awkward, unpoetic renderings of the Alexandrian text—often in the form of paraphrase or "dynamic equivalence"—to the memorable beauty of the King James Version. The first English translation that gave preference to the Alexandrian tradition was the English Revised Version of the 1870's, which attempted to stay as close to the KJV as possible. This was in accordance with the work of the Authorized Version itself, which borrowed heavily from the beautiful and precise phrasing of Tyndale. Others, such as the American Standard Version (1901) and the Revised Standard Version (1952) continued after this fashion. But then the floodgates opened: Since 1945, over 1,200 English translations of parts or the whole of the Bible have flowed from publishing houses eager to put the sacred text in the language of Modern Man. One particularly vivid example is Eu-



Melanie Anderson

gene Peterson's *The Message*, published in 1993. The language of Psalm 1 ("Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly . . . ") so familiar to churchgoing Christians in the English-speaking world, becomes:

> How well God must like you
> you don't hang out at Sin Saloon
> you don't slink along Dead End Road
> you don't go to Smart-Mouth College.
> Instead you thrill to God's Word,
> you chew on Scripture day and night.

This is an extreme example of the decline of sacred language, but it represents the rank individualism that pervades the whole process of Bible translation in Today's English, which rejects the traditional notion that the Scriptures belong to the Church, as do the individual Christians who read, sing, pray, and memorize them. If the Scriptures are the treasure of the Church, then we must come to Her to nurse at Her breast, accepting what we are given, all the while striving to drink more deeply of the tradition handed down to us. If they belong to Smart-Mouth College and her tenured professors, however, then we become mere consumers of an ever-changing Word.

For a time, it was difficult (especially for Protestants) to know which translation to expect on any given Sunday, though many, if not most, churches settled on the NIV. Now that a good number of seminarians are being taught that the recently published ESV (English Standard Version) is superior to the NIV, a new wave of confusion is sure to come.

Children once memorized the 23rd Psalm, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, John 3:16, *etc.*, in the same language that their parents and grandparents used. Those generations stood together and confessed the same wording of the Nicene Creed (not "one in being") and sang the same liturgies and hymns that their forebears had sung. Today, invariably, a chorus of confusion is heard as "And with thy spirit" is said at the same time as "And also with you!" or "Forgive us our *trespasses*," together with "*sins*." Many churches rely on brand-new "creative" liturgies each Sunday, leaving worshipers with their noses buried in bulletins or with their eyes fixed on a video-projection screen.

Fundamentalists claimed that the textual criticism of Tischendorf, Westcott, and Hort was part of a modernist conspiracy against the Church and the Scriptures, designed to divide the generations and undercut the authority of Scripture by producing myriad translations of the Bible. What paranoia! ◁▷

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Riots in the Suburbs

The Programmed Suicide of France

by Claude Polin

By now, most have heard—sometimes with sorrow, sometimes with delight—of the latest fashion in the working-class suburbs of France: setting fire to cars at night. There is a lot more to this than a nocturnal rite for rival juvenile gangs. It is probably exaggerated to forecast a civil war: Two sides are necessary to make a war, and the French hardly seem anxious to wage one. But it could very well be a sign of irretrievable decay for France—and maybe not for France alone.

Some alleged factors regarding the social unrest not only are of dubious explanatory value but look, frankly, preposterous. The *Economist*'s (November 12-18, 2005) short-sightedness and intellectual platitude were appalling: France's racial arrogance and economic inefficiency are supposed to have brought forth what France deserved. While it is true that rampant socialism in France destroys initiative and opportunities for work, it is also quite obvious that Mr. Blair's policy failed to avert terrorism backed by racial prejudices hostile to England. (The father of one of last summer's London Underground terrorists owned two shops, two houses, and one Mercedes.) It is wrong and just plain laughable for France to stand accused of racist indifference or exploitative cruelty toward her immigrant populations, whether or not they are legally French. Countless "suburban projects" have been implemented, and billions of euros (or, formerly, francs) have been spent. Housing, recreational centers, schools, and so forth have been generously provided; these fell short of building little paradises but could have sufficed for a start. All of that was to no avail.

It is a simple and obvious fact that immigrants used to enter France seeking jobs, good education, and training, and quite a few were successful—so much so that they stayed instead of returning to their countries, in whose development they could have participated.

But, following a long tradition of public assistance to the helpless and unlucky, France has come to be known more and more as a country where unemployment compensation is so substantial and long-lasting as to compete favorably with the dividends of working. And the French are directly responsible for the spreading of the word, constantly behaving as if the state had to provide them with whatever they may desire.

This has not been lost on many ears in developing countries. So we have to face another equally brutal fact: It is no longer only the ambitious and capable, the ones who are quite able to integrate into the social fabric of the country, who flock into France. More and more of those who pour in are just plain wretched people (*e.g.*, Africans from the poorest countries) who have heard of this wonder world where everyone can enjoy public welfare at little or no cost, where you can do nothing and get paid for it. (I overheard one youngster who, when asked what he wanted, replied, "everything.") Of course, France does not have the means to distribute royal dividends to everyone begging for them. So these expectations are not met, and, the longer some have been kept waiting, or the younger the immigrants, the more they tend to become enraged. Since, eventually, they all manage to get some sort of assistance, the very fact that they obtain it without having much to show for it constitutes a very powerful enticement to believe there must be a reason for that. And what reason could be easier to grasp, and more powerful, than that they have some innate right to it, whether by nature or by some sort of compensation for the wrong that has been done to them? Hence, they get angry, and, since there are plenty of demagogues to tell them they are right to be angry, the more they are given, the more they think they are entitled to, and the more they feel mistreated and unfairly rewarded when not given everything that normal working people possess.

This explains their very ambiguous feeling about French society and the French state: They love it for what they think they can get from it (they demand to be granted French citizenship), and they hate it for what it does not give them. So they molest anything symbolic of organized French society, be it firemen, schools, ambulances, or buses. Some noticed they were harming their next-door neighbors as well. There is a logic in this aggressiveness: Because he has a car, my next-door neighbor becomes a part of the system and, therefore, has to be branded (literally). Anyone who has a car must be a slave-driver; let us make sure that he does not drive any more!

The rioters' supposed wailing for employment has to be counterbalanced by any schoolteacher's daily experience when his classes are overflowing with immigrants: There is an obvious propensity for the students, rather than attending classes and trying to learn (French, in particular), to prefer the oh-so-convenient claim that whatever they attempt will be of no avail and, therefore, useless in the first place, so they should be immediately compensated for the ill will they are doomed to meet. Either there is not enough work in France even for Frenchmen, and immigrants should not be coming today, while yesterday's should strive all the more for qualifications; or there is available work, and, again, it is up to the new French to prove themselves able to work, which means first of all starting to study furiously at school. This may not be enough, but it is an absolute prerequisite, which, moreover, would start alleviating the prejudices of the employers. And, if they are still not happy, why should they not try their luck elsewhere, the way Europeans themselves have been doing for centuries? In any case, continuous assistance without any counterpart is a self-defeating process; beyond a certain level, it amounts to admitting to the giver's guilt.

Another opportunity has not escaped the consideration of those of the immigrant classes who have a knack for entrepre-

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neurship. How could they avoid being enthralled by the lure of easy money—and the consideration that goes with it—that can be immediately harvested from illegal trafficking of all kinds, especially drug dealing? It did not take them long to realize that there is so much sympathy for their predicament that they run a very marginal risk in setting up their lethal business, and what glory for the gang! The rioting was, to some extent, a reaction to a timid attempt by the police to regain some kind of control over certain suburban areas that had degenerated into zones of extreme violence, blatant lawlessness, and drug trafficking. I doubt very much that the mediocre awards of an honest but modest job can beat, in the eyes of the many, the glamour and flamboyance of beating the system they hate anyway.

And then, over the whole stage, hovers the overpowering shadow of Islam.

There are undoubtedly quite a few moderate Muslims. They are not the rioters, and I dare say their moderation stems less from Islam being intrinsically moderate than from their being moderately believing, and rather secularized, Muslims. There is a good case to be made for Islam having always been a religion of warriors—often, trade warriors. But even barring this view, I confess I am stunned by the general readiness to condone the idea of a revival of the Islamic faith, as if it were but natural for any religious faith—and particularly such a reactionary one—to overcome the glorious dedication of the modern world to the only god who can be attractive to it: namely, Progress. Let us pay serious attention to what is glaringly obvious in France's suburbs. The youths who burn cars are not seeking Allah; they are seeking two things that ambitious Islamic leaders are quite quick to grasp and eager to provide. The imams of France may have been pleased with the riots, but not one seems to have been directly involved in triggering or managing the troubles. We should not overlook the general climate of hostility to France that they have proved instrumental in creating, and that obviously serves as a background for the whole drama.

These young Muslims are perfectly aware that they resemble dropouts and have little about which to boast. How self-redeeming to be told no one of them is to be blamed for his own wretchedness! This is the time-tested trick: better to blame the other than yourself. It has already made a success of Marxism. To achieve this goal, however, young Muslims need a scapegoat to stand accused of their plight, and to be hated. And who better than the country they pour into to get what their own countries cannot offer them—that wicked, infidel Western society? Islam is the Marxism of the 21st century, the prophet of a new class struggle, the bourgeois class being the French (not to say Western man, for why should Islam differentiate among infidels?), and the proletariat, the Muslims. And this new Marxism is even more effective than the old in that it permeates its followers with a sense of identity definitely more powerful than that arising from belonging to the worldwide community of proletarians, for the new convert is offered an opportunity for pride: How can he not be proud of himself as a recognized member of a glorious and everlasting community, which maintains an open line to god himself? And, mind you, this is a god who promises happiness not only beyond this life but within this one, by the simple means of revolution.

In other words, I do not think there can be much doubt that an inferiority complex has fanned the radicalization of Islam. Now that the green flag has been raised, the time of hatred and revenge has come, the time for the Western world to suffer and for France, in particular, to pay for her arrogant ways of dealing with Muslims. (She did, after all, have the affront to turn Algeria into two French *départements*.) Islam feeds on resentment, and any Muslim who does not feel this way must be a traitor. If there is any way other than brute force to quench this feeling, I do not know it. What I think obvious, at least, is that the Catholic Church has chosen the worst possible moment to practice Her new policy of self-deprecation. The history of the relationship between Islam and Christianity may have been bloody indeed; nevertheless, no one can claim that the Muslims were ever a bunch of innocent pacifists awaiting slaughter, horrified at the very idea that war against the infidel could be sacred. The unilateral repentance initiated by the late Pope John Paul II, instead of creating a charitable attitude toward Christians, could not but fan the fire of Muslim hatred for a Faith Whose very charity they despise as weakness.

How could any of the governing classes promote a *preference* for old French ways without decrying this new France, built not on the basis of a shared, inherited soul but on the individual's will; not on a common history but on a daily plebiscite? To attack tolerance would amount to sawing off the branch on which one is sitting.

I do not doubt that many of the rioters may have been but marionettes whose strings were more or less loosely pulled by the puppet masters. I do not doubt either that the French authorities were (and still are) actually scared brainless at the possibility that the proverbial matter might hit the proverbial fan in the form of some rioter's blood being spilled. (Why should they otherwise imagine that the best way to fight fire is to condone the maiming of the firemen and the wounding of some 150 policemen, while boasting "no arsonist was hurt"?)

But the hidden hands would not have been so effective, nor the authorities so indecisive, nor the rioters so arrogant, nor the riots so often more spontaneous than orchestrated, if it were not for one simple crucial fact that seems to me to be the agent of the explosion and will remain so for future ones.

Not so long ago, there was only a trickle of immigrants, impressed with the prestige of France, striving to speak French, dreaming of becoming French, and yearning to be part of the French labor force. Why would they have come to France otherwise? The political mantra today is just the opposite: toler-

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ance. We are supposed to tolerate a flood and call it a fertilizing Nile. We are supposed to tolerate the indefinite growth—caused both by the continuous flow of new arrivals and the high birthrate of yesterday's immigrants—of a proletariat without any real qualification, nor any desire for assimilation (for years, the rappers have shouted in primitive French their disgust for anything French) but which, on the other hand, does not want to forfeit the rights and privileges of French nationals. (There are 300,000 immigrants, both legal and illegal, per year, according to the parliamentarian Pierre Lellouche, cited in the weekly *Valeurs Actuelles*, November 18-24, 2005. The surface area of France is equal to that of Texas.) We are supposed to tolerate both the claim of criminals to protection under French laws and the lenience of the judges when they break them. We are supposed to tolerate the senseless killing of an old man, the burning of buses full of passengers. Tolerate? Nay, we are supposed to admire alien cultures to the extent of encouraging an immigration that aims at defending and promoting its alien ways of living (polygamy, for instance), while fighting the right of French citizens of old to keep theirs. France has become one of these houses where tolerance is a profession. No wonder some rap stars call to rape her! (The sanctification of tolerance even had the rather funny consequence of inducing the passage of a bill prohibiting the Islamic veil to be worn at school: It was feared that the republic might otherwise forfeit its commitment to the secularity that is hailed as the very expression of real tolerance!)

The driving force behind the riots is not an economic situation but a cultural mind-set. The French have lost all desire to assert their culture, lost interest in their own cultural tradition, and, as a result, their present culture is a timid and self-ridiculing ghost of its former self: Why should it be attractive to aliens?

That this tolerance is self-defeating is obvious on two counts. On one hand, the new populations learn from the ever-so-tolerant French themselves to despise the French culture that their parents have only barely begun to internalize. The days are long gone when Mr. Senghor, the former president of Senegal, successfully strove to become a professor of French grammar. On the other hand, it is only natural that, the more obsequious the old French are, the more arrogant the new ones. The more despicable the former, the more the latter hate those they still see as their exploiters.

It is not that laws do not exist to control the violence (they date back to the 19th century); it is that law enforcement lacks punch, because of a tolerance that actually shows that the French are afraid to be French, and even ashamed; that they have lost respect for their past, their customs, their beliefs, and their language—*i.e.*, their own culture. The real question is: Where does the disease come from? It is not difficult to isolate the two main causes, just politically incorrect to do so.

Whatever the merits attributed to it, democracy, particularly French-style democracy, has as its fountainhead the idea that there should not be any bond—any society—among men to which they have not consented. Therefore, it cannot but contradict the other idea that a nation is built of—and cannot exist without—a heritage common to all her sons and daughters. This contradiction was already inherent in the French Revolution, which called the patriots to arms so that the land of their fathers could be turned into a nonexclusive club. In other words, as of 1789, France was a self-proclaimed open city: The only prerequisite for being a citizen was not to have inherited the national culture but to declare oneself willing to inhabit the soil of France and obey her laws. Our good republicans are perfectly logical in promoting suffrage for aliens. Why, however, would anyone want to join the new body? Obviously not out of admiration for France or out of the desire to become culturally French. Why, then, if not by calculated interest? Join us, if it is of any use to you; opt out, when it is not profitable anymore; or, even better, organize some rioting.

Old habits die hard, and, for many years, young Frenchmen continued to learn that they had to defend the French Republic, at least as long as France had nondemocratic neighbors. But how could the old spirit survive when the new spirit was geared toward France becoming the motherland of the rights not of Frenchmen but of man?

The withering away of the French soul has another obvious cause: the economic development of France. The French consumer enjoys consumption, irrespective of anything other than his enjoyment, while, at the same time, he is after any goods he may like, and particularly new ones. The French citizen as a consumer is a citizen of the world, and it shows: There are far more restaurants in Paris offering exotic, rather than French, cooking. Good heavens! Even Frenchmen buy wine in plastic containers, labeled "*en provenance de pays de la Communauté Européenne*" ("product of the European Community"), and would rather travel to Thailand than to Provence! Anxious as they are to have a more comfortable life, the immigrants follow suit and end up being trained to seek whatever their new country can offer, whether local or not. Technical progress achieves the same enfranchisement; consumer reports ignore borders and advise one to buy the best object for the lowest cost regardless of its origin, while the jeans-clad, Converse-sneakered French youth listen to radio, TV, and the internet for news not of France but of the world. Individual economic interest calls for France to be ever more dependent on imports and ever more a nondescript part of an international market flooded with ever-cheaper goods, produced by foreign slaves under the supervision of international conglomerates following the rules of the "free market." No wonder it becomes increasingly difficult in France to differentiate between socialists and conservatives; they are equally eager to provide cheap goods to constituencies equally eager

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for them, even though neither party knows exactly how to provide French customers with the ways to buy them. No wonder they both voted "yes" to a European constitution dissolving the French national identity!

Local life, local communities, traditional local customs, and antiquated laws make for a nice tourist show, but, when the curtain falls, everybody hails the benefits of globalization (except the heirs of Trotsky who call themselves *altermondialistes*, but I would hardly rely on their respect for traditional ways of life). Between French national identity and what is called the "economic development" of France, there is an ever-widening rift.

These arguments all lead to the same conclusion: The driving force behind the riots is not, contrary to accepted wisdom, an economic situation but a cultural mind-set. The social crisis in France is a cultural crisis. The French have lost all desire to assert their culture, lost interest in their own cultural tradition, and, as a result, their present culture is a timid and self-ridiculing ghost of its former self: Why should it be attractive to aliens? Why go back to economic deprivation when the French education that would help correct it is construed as despicable and useless? Why refer to the superiority of another faith when the Christian Faith is openly neglected, if not spurned and considered backward? And why should immigrants behave otherwise and adore France, particularly as they are citizens whose nationality is still mainly a slip of paper?

But, some might argue, is there not an elite whose function is precisely to preserve and develop French heritage, even though the masses are lured by cultural products ready for immediate and easy consumption? My answer would be an unequivocal "no": There is no official elite devoted to such an unpopular purpose.

It is unpopular because this would amount to calling the French masses to arms, whereas economic insularity or isolationism mixed with a lack of cultural communion makes not only for an unwillingness to fight together but for cowardice and a propensity to buy one's safety by private bargaining with the enemy. (I heard one man say on television, "If they have something against the cops, they may have their reasons, but why burn *my* car?" A woman wailed, "Have pity for *my* shop!")

As for the so-called French intelligentsia, ever since the 18th century, they have been "enlightened," which means they are convinced nothing is valid but that which the people think and are ready to accept as the truth. Is abortion right or wrong? Wrong question; the right one—the democratic one—is: *Is the majority in favor of it or against it?* What marks the intellectual is his ability to be both master and slave to public opinion. The French people want tolerance? Tolerance it will be. (Let us observe that tolerance is an admirable weapon against intellectual superiority: Tolerance means there are no objective criteria of worth.) How can you be a devoted Frenchman? This is so narrow-minded, so unintelligent, so intolerable . . .

As for the political elite, it is roughly divided into two shades of socialism. The so-called right always stands chin up, whereas the left always maintains a bleeding heart. The latter destroys all the floodgates. (Immigrants should have the right to vote just like ordinary citizens, since they live on the same premises.) The former opens the gates legally. (Islam is welcome, provided the imams speak French.) But, with the exception of a few unspeakable louts, who fortunately are forbidden to enter the French parliament, every honorable representative will agree that France is lucky indeed to attract so many immigrants, with only one provision: that they "respect the laws of the republic." All agree that it is highly inadvisable to use real force; all agree that a night in France is "peaceful" when fewer than 150 cars are burned. All display the same admirable courage by solemnly warning that it is wrong to burn cars.

> France has come to be known more and more as a country where unemployment compensation is so substantial and long-lasting as to compete favorably with the dividends of working. And the French are directly responsible for the spreading of the word, constantly behaving as if the state had to provide them with whatever they may desire.

This touching unanimity actually has a very obvious reason. How could any of the governing classes promote a preference for old French ways without decrying this new France, built not on the basis of a shared, inherited soul but on the individual's will; not on a common history but on a daily plebiscite? To attack tolerance would amount to sawing off the branch on which one is sitting. For the so-called right to promote tolerance is somewhat ironic, however. To tolerate the arrogant difference of an alien community is no way to induce it to minimize its difference; it is an encouragement to entrench itself in its difference, to be ever prouder of it and, therefore, ever more difficult to placate—and to put to work. The politically correct French right is thereby doomed to a race in demagoguery with a left that will always beat it, since the left does not make any bones about its love for a multicultural France. Hence Jacques Chirac's latest move in response to the riots: to collect, in the form of a new tax, enough money for an umpteenth suburban renewal and to welcome the European Community's additional funds to pour into the bottomless suburban wells. During the French Revolution, on January 21, 1794, a man by the name of Quatremère was beheaded for "having humiliated the people by his innumerable acts of charity to the poor." Of course, the French political class is immune to this threat: Its members seldom live close enough to the ghettos.

The lesson of these new "events in France" (as Edmund Burke called the French Revolution) is obviously lost on the average Frenchman. Could it be a warning to the nations of the Western world not to forfeit their souls? ◁▷

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Seasoned Travels

by Catharine Savage Brosman

"The land of the heart is the land of the West."

—G.P. Morris

The Hundredth Meridian: Seasons and Travels in the New Old West
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.
Rockford: Chronicles Press;
149 pp., $21.95

◆

Readers of *Chronicles* are familiar with Chilton Williamson, Jr.'s regular contributions under the title *The Hundredth Meridian*, a rubric launched in the 1990's. The first two dozen or so of these columns were conceived as chapters in a serialized book. With minor revisions and the addition of a Foreword, this book has now appeared. Those who have already savored his work will be delighted; new readers will discover fine writing and important reflections of and on contemporary America.

The book belongs to the prose genre now often termed *creative nonfiction*—either personal narratives or short informal essays, or, as here sometimes, a blend of the two modes. The chapters, which follow Williamson's original order of publication, display loose geographic, seasonal, and thematic axes, crossing over, reinforcing, and meshing with one another ("wheels within wheels," the author calls them). The settings are generally in the intermountain West—that vast area from the Continental Divide through the Great Basin to the Sierra Nevada, and over a range of latitudes, in this case from Wyoming to the Mexican border. The author excels at conveying what it is like to experience at close hand the contemporary American West. His descriptions give the very feel of its air, wind, altitudes, and enormous spaces; its red mesas, ochre sands, and teasingly blue mountains; its aridity, cold mornings, hot afternoons, loneliness, and the character of those who work there. The book also overflows with moments of friendship, the sort based on sharing rough experiences in a rough, if beautiful, land.

Melanie Anderson

This volume offers, however, more than personal reports. For even when recounting particular experiences, such as breaking a horse, rounding up cattle, camping, or stalking elk, and still more in chapters that directly address current problems, Williamson provides important critical viewpoints on the geographical, historical, and cultural features of the Old West (in the 19th century and first part of the 20th), on what of it remains, and on the successive changes that now threaten, on the land itself and in the American mind, those remnants. Williamson's eye is keen, his understanding broad, his intellectual acumen right for the tasks of illuminating the contemporary West for those who know it and those who do not and identifying both its strengths and vulnerabilities. He has the courage to state plainly truths as he sees them, whether they will be welcomed or not, speaking, for instance, of "our congestive and confused civilization" and the "rationalist utilitarian colossus" that waged war against the Confederacy; noting that exploitation of other peoples had long been practiced in the Southwest; and observing that, in New Mexico, descendants of the *conquistadores* despise Mexican wetbacks and other migrants.

Williamson is, in short, a genuine and important cultural critic, one to harken to, unlike countless other commentators thus styled, often ignorant of history and wielding a multicultural sword of base metal, who, having devoted journalistic or academic articles to exposés, diatribes, and theories concerning America, have gained wide but undue recognition and influence as authorities on this nation. Whereas some of them have succeeded, as he notes, in transforming the pioneer and post-pioneer West "into an object of sophisticated postmodern ridicule," Williamson properly connects

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that earlier West to much that is good in the character of America, including its vision of freedom and the pastoral ideal, which reaches ultimately back to the ancient world.

Obviously, Williamson must likewise be distinguished from promoters of the slick, commercial "New West," whose enthusiasm, displayed in journalistic publications and put into action through financial and political power, goes beyond ordinary self-interest to ambitious and greedy visions of redesigning the region to accommodate ever greater populations, ever higher profits, ever more pleasure. Identifying the West as one of the few regions where American values of earlier centuries and decades still are visible, he observes how what he calls "the collapse of a once-great civilization (our own)" has driven its refugees from both coasts to try again, in immense spaces that are mostly desert, to impose their notion of progress and achieve ideal communities. They do so, of course, at the expense of the land and particularly its scarce water, and to the detriment of older uses of resources, well established since the 19th century (sometimes far earlier), such as sheep and cattle ranching and logging, activities which, very broadly speaking, were in equilibrium with one another, the population, and the environment. It is ultimately at their own expense as well as others' that these new Westerners exploit the land, since it is obvious that large resettlements to the intermountain region and the consequent overappropriation of resources will make the frontiers recede and deplete the region's value, culturally and even economically, so that the dreamt-of paradise, momentarily protected still by wilderness, finally will disappear.

Williamson's strong, often lively style fits well the region and people he evokes. It can be casual, with homely talk about horses and sheep; it can be terse, to make a point; it can be reflective and erudite. It is frequently lyrical or painterly, as in the following description of a southern Arizona landscape:

> the brown winter desert touched by the pale green of the saguaro, the yellowish creosote bush, and underlain by the gray-pink surface hardpan: wide valleys many miles across sweeping between ragged parallel ranges of red volcanic rock blackened with the dark desert varnish . . .

With skill, the author weaves such passages into his usual narrative structure, which also includes anecdotes; portraits of friends and others; dialogues; historical, topographical, and economic facts; and judgments, always cogent. He does not shy from the very personal. It is, after all, always through the particular that literature reaches the general, and even if, as Dr. Johnson noted, it is needless to "number the stripes of the tulip," well-selected details from a writer's experience are what allow readers to share his vision and enrich their own. Williamson's position cannot be solipsistic in any case, since it is grounded on a sense of nature that takes into account religious and moral perspectives, involving men's relationships with both it and one another.

By his devotion to the American West, displayed in a writer's proper way—that is, through writing, astutely and sensitively, about what he cares about—Williamson continues a splendid Western literary tradition, begun in the 19th century and lasting to the present. Names from this tradition, by no means monolithic, that come to mind, among others, are Theodore Roosevelt, Willa Cather, J. Frank Dobie, A.B. Guthrie, Jr., Zane Grey, Wallace Stegner, William MacLeod Raine, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, and Cormac McCarthy. (One should remember that Williamson has published fine novels about the west—*Desert Light* and *The Homestead*.) Critics, unfortunately, too often think of work such as theirs and his as merely *regional*, intending the word pejoratively; among those just mentioned, only Cather and McCarthy, probably, escape the dismissal implied by the term. To suggest here that Williamson's work belongs with theirs is not excessive. He shares their concern for the region, deep bonds with it, grasp of its features, and, chiefly, literary skill in depicting it. His present-day task is to distinguish the Old West, or "land as it was," of which they wrote, long part of America's consciousness and persisting still in some areas, from today's ersatz copies, as a way of identifying what may still be preserved and how.

Other predecessors are two environmental writers, Marc Reisner (whom Williamson mentions), author of *Cadillac Desert*, an exposé of attempts to redesign the West through water diversion, and Edward Abbey, to whom the author pays homage in a chapter recounting an attempt to find his grave. Williamson specifies, however, that, if he is himself an environmentalist, it is only in lower case. That Abbey has been turned into the uppercase variety, his interests having become, as Williamson notes, "glamorous," is not his fault, while the ecological degradations that have worsened since his death give additional force to his arguments without justifying extremists' positions.

> What the Old West had that the New West increasingly lacks are, finally, reality and dignity—the reality of what is basic to human experience, the dignity that comes from acceptance of the physical trials, dangers, hardships, and experience which accompany that reality. Both these elements tend to erode from our modern, complicated, multilayered, remote, technologized, abstracted, indoor society . . .

This observation from the Foreword, reprinted on cover four, is a fair sample of the sort of cultural criticism to be found in this volume. Whether, on the one hand, aggressive New Age Environmentalists and their money machines, including those who would cut off all backcountry access and those crusading against traditional water use by ranchers and irrigation farmers, or, on the other, crass developers grabbing land (and water diverted from the older purposes) for resorts (including golf courses), huge vacation houses, and vast tracts of housing with bluegrass lawns sprawled around the big Western cities, those designing the "New West" are a threat to much that was formerly good not only beyond the hundredth meridian but east of it also. In very personal terms, Williamson's book conveys a sane man's experience and appreciation of this good, for readers' enjoyment and enlightenment. ◁

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Contra War, *Contra* Neo-conned

James Vogel

Neo-CONNED! Just War Principles: A Condemnation of War in Iraq
edited by D. Liam O'Huallachain and J. Forrest Sharpe
Norfolk, VA: Light in the Darkness Publications; 458 pp., $25.95

Neo-CONNED! Again: Hypocrisy, Lawlessness, and the Rape of Iraq
edited by D. Liam O'Huallachain and J. Forrest Sharpe
Norfolk, VA: Light in the Darkness Publications; 670 pp., $29.95

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Readers of *Chronicles* know that the American war with Iraq is worthy of condemnation on many levels. Not only has it continued to earn our country the opprobrium of a number of Middle Eastern nations, and created frustration among many others, but the invasion and occupation of Iraq flies in the face of the classical Christian notion of a just war. With some estimates of 100,000 Iraqi civilian casualties and close to 2,150 dead American soldiers (with more to come, as we show no sign of developing an exit strategy soon), more people—a recent poll indicates almost two thirds of the country—are beginning to ask, "What have we accomplished in Iraq?" and "Was it *really* worth it after all?"

The *Neo-CONNED!* volumes provide the most comprehensive analysis of the Iraq war to date. They are the first products of Light in the Darkness Publications, the newest imprint of IHS Press, a Catholic publishing house dedicated to reintroducing works dealing with a wider knowledge and appreciation of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church. Many of the contributors will be familiar to *Chronicles* readers: Thomas Fleming, the late Samuel Francis, Thomas Ryba, Joseph Sobran, Paul Gottfried, and Pat Buchanan, among others. Taken together, the *Neo-CONNED!* volumes supply readers with commentary and criticism from every angle: from the incompatibility of the Iraq conflict with Catholic just-war theory, to the influence of neoconservative foreign policy on the Bush administration's decision to go to war in March 2003, to discussions of the morality and legitimacy of conscientious objection, and more.

That broad range of coverage is one of the outstanding things about this collection. The editors have compiled what amounts to a small encyclopedia of studies, conveniently divided into various categories, such as "Statesmen Speak: A War Both Unnecessary and Vain," "Neo-Cons, 9-11, and the Pretext for War," and "The Snowballing of American Lawlessness." (This latter section effectively constitutes a specific, critical look at the American "War on Terror," considering America's abuse of, and disregard for, the laws of armed conflict, the illegal detentions at Gitmo and elsewhere, and the torture scandals at Abu Ghraib.) Among the contributors can be found bishops, priests, statesmen, columnists, professors, authors of a variety of political stripes, and even scientists and diplomats. *Neo-CONNED!* and *Neo-CONNED! Again* provide the only integral view of the Iraq war to date. In these volumes, no stone is left unturned, no aspect of the conflict undiscussed.

Neo-CONNED!, the primary focus of this review, deals almost exclusively with the just-war doctrine, something only relatively recently challenged among Christians. Modern man, of course, would love nothing more than to pretend that, somehow, morality simply does not come into play in wartime. ("All's fair in love and war.") Christians, however, more than anyone else, have no excuse for falling for such platitudes as "America is a Christian nation; the influence of 'democracy' will make evangelization easier in Iraq." Beyond being simply false—Chaldean Catholics have been forced to flee the country in droves since our invasion, and the new constitution (as of this writing) seems bound to support *sharia* in practice, if not by mandate—the argument misses the point. Many American Catholics (and Christians in general) have either totally ignored the Church's teaching on just wars, or, worse, they have tried to bend it to fit their preconceived notions supporting the invasion.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that three things are necessary for a just war: a just cause, a right intention, and the command of the sovereign. These criteria have been fleshed out through the centuries by other theologians and theorists, but any other conditions (such as the use of proportionate means) end up being subsidiary to the ones just mentioned. *Neo-CONNED!* thoroughly examines whether the Iraq war was instigated with a right intention and, more importantly, whether there was a just cause.

The ostensible "just cause" given originally was, of course, the presence of "weapons of mass destruction" and the necessity for regime change. A revealing interview with the late Jude Wanniski goes into great depth regarding the false claims of Iraq's possession of WMDs, the deliberate misinformation fed to the American public *en masse*, and the consequent lack of any convincing reason for America's invasion of Iraq. Pat Buchanan points out the influence of the Israeli lobby on American foreign policy, rarely seen as explicitly exerted as it was in the case of the Iraq war. Others note the specters of foreign oil, imperial ambitions, and the unjustifiable doctrine of "preemptive warfare."

The volume includes a noteworthy essay by Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani, prefect for the Catholic Church's Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith from 1966 to 1968. He raises the question of whether modern warfare, with its horrific technology and lack of discrimination between combatants and civilians, can *ever* be justified. He writes:

> Modern wars can never fulfill those conditions which govern—theoretically—a just and lawful war. Moreover, no conceivable cause could ever be sufficient justification for the evils, the slaughter, the destruction, the moral and religious upheavals which war today entails.

Christians who ignore or try to skirt the principles of a just war ought to consider the quotation from Cardinal Ottaviani and ask themselves, with regard to the conflict in Iraq: *Cui bono*? Is Iraq truly better off with a dismantled infrastructure, a growing insurgency, a depleted Christian presence, and an overt Islamic republic in the works? With the body count rising among both Americans and Iraqis, what has been gained for us or for them? As Thomas Fleming points out in his essay, we have only succeeded in uniting Muslims in a common cause, something Belloc thought would require the restoration of the caliphate.

If you are already convinced of the immorality and illegality of the Iraq war, the *Neo-CONNED!* volumes will confirm your position and give you a greater breadth and depth for your arguments.

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If you are unsure what to think, it is unimaginable that you could avail yourself of the wealth of information in the more than 80 essays (across both volumes) and remain skeptical regarding the immorality of this war. If you or someone you know still maintains that it is one's patriotic duty to support and defend our actions in the Middle East, *Neo-CONNED!* offers proof beyond debate that the Iraq war flies in the face of the Christian just-war tradition, is ruining our country financially, and will only end in America's being viewed, at best, with suspicion on the international scene and, at worst, as a bully.

James Vogel is an assistant editor at Angelus Press.

Europe's Belgian Future

by Thomas Fleming

A Throne in Brussels: Britain, the Saxe-Coburgs and the Belgianisation of Europe
by Paul Belien
Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic; 384 pp., $49.90

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If you plan to read only one book on foreign affairs in the next year, you should read Paul Belien's *A Throne in Brussels*. Belien is a lawyer and a journalist, a rare free-market advocate who understands the importance of ethnic identity. On one level, Belien's book is a ruthless investigation of the history and misconduct of the ruling class of one small European nation, but the implications for the future of Europe—and North America—are vast. As Europe becomes more and more like Belgium, a country whose very existence depends on the denial of the idea of the nation, Belgium's abysmal political morality may well become the international norm.

Much of the book is devoted to the history of the Belgian monarchy, from Leopold of Saxe-Coburg to the reigning Albert II. The initial chapter, which involves the creation of Belgium, may stand as an allegory of Belgian history. Leopold I had already enjoyed a long amoral career of lechery and disloyalty—supporting both sides in the Napoleonic wars—before he wooed and wedded Princess Charlotte of Great Britain. Charlotte's death destroyed his dream of being prince consort of a reigning queen, and Leopold would have to "rule" Britain by exerting his fascinating influence on his young niece Victoria and indirectly through Albert, his nephew or (since Leopold appears to have bedded his brother's wife) son.

Like other members of his clan, Leopold spent his early life looking for a crown. He ultimately rejected the throne of Greece because he did not like the terms connected with it but, through the intervention of his British family connections, accepted the offer to become king of the Belgians. The name is instructive. The Belgae had been an ancient Celtic people who were absorbed into the Gallo-Roman population and disappeared long before the fall of the western empire. The territory that included modern Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands had gone by many names and been ruled by many masters. When the southern and northern Netherlands were reunited at the end of the Napoleonic wars into a united kingdom under Willem of Orange, the French-speaking Walloons of the south, who resented separation from the French Empire, began plotting to detach the south from Willem's kingdom and have it annexed to France. Their revolution, significantly, was the work of veteran Jacobins and their sons.

This plot, however, was unacceptable to the Great Powers, who had laid French territorial expansion to rest. Ultimately, the solution was to establish the kingdom of the Belgians (a people who did not exist) in the southern Netherlands, which included the French-speaking Walloons, Dutch-speaking Flemings (Flemish is only a dialect of Dutch), and a small but significant population of German speakers, many of them clustered in Luxembourg (which was later detached). This unsatisfactory shotgun marriage, which failed to satisfy the Walloons and disgusted the Flemish, was the kingdom offered to Uncle Leopold. As one of the leaders of the "Belgian" revolutionaries observed, "As I was unable to give Belgium to France, I gave it to the devil." Belien summarizes the fateful train of events:

> In spite of the protestations of King Willem, the Powers accepted the creation of the new kingdom under Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. Hence a totally new state came into existence. The revolutionaries who had created it had wanted it to be absorbed as quickly as possible into France. The majority of the people living in its territory had wanted to remain part of the Netherlands. Being an artificial construction and not a nation, Belgium never became a fatherland that was loved by its people. Some loved France, some loved the Netherlands, others loved their local Flemish or Walloon communities, but no one loved Belgium. Those who defended Belgium did so because it was their gravy train. One of these was Leopold.

In order to unify his diverse kingdom, Willem of Orange had already established a national fund for building up the industry and commerce of the south, and Leopold quickly turned this *Société Générale* into a cash cow for himself and his loyal supporters. With a huge percentage of the national economy under his control, Leopold was able to buy up the political opposition, buy off the hostile press, and silence critics in the Catholic Church—all but Msgr. Joachim Pecci, sent as papal nuncio in 1843. Pecci was finally summoned back to Italy to become, in turn, bishop of Perugia and Pope Leo XIII, whom Belien is right to call one of the greatest popes of the 19th century (though his praise of the pope for "adopting a conciliatory position to democratic and social movements" is a misleading description of a creative reactionary).

To all his bad qualities, Leopold added one quasivirtue: He was a shrewd, Machiavellian politician who relied on a combination of diplomacy, corruption, and violence to establish the fiction of national unity that would be maintained by his successors down to the present. Metternich quipped that any state could survive if it had Leopold as its king. To repress support for the House of Orange, Leopold went beyond corruption and used his army—the largest *per capita* military establishment in Europe—to launch a brutal attack on the Orangists, whose leaders were harassed, arrested, or exiled. The rest were intimidated into submission.

Leopold's reign illustrates three themes of Belgian history: first, an unremitting campaign to eliminate or minimize the Flemish language and identity; second, a

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political system, dominated by the king, based on coercion and corruption; third, which flows from the combination of the first two, the development of a state without a nation.

Belien, in telling the tale of the Belgian monarchy, offers hair-raising tales of greed, violence, corruption, and perversion, from the brutal and genocidal occupation of the Congo to more recent sex scandals involving the kidnapping, rape, and torture (all caught on film for the viewing pleasure of perverts) of young women and girls. When investigators began to put together a coherent picture of a prostitution-pornography ring with connections in high places, the investigation was suppressed.

Belgium, Belien concludes, is, in every respect, the model for a new Europe that prates of democracy while establishing a centralized dictatorship, defends ethnic minorities while destroying real nations, and, though professing the highest ideals of humanity, sinks into a sewer of vicious depravity. Only half joking, he proposes to establish the Belgian Saxe-Coburgs as the constitutional monarchs of the European Union. He closes, however, on the optimistic note of a man who understands human liberty:

> The future of the European continent depends to a large extent on the reader and on decisions he allows his politicians to take. It is not inevitable that all Europeans will be Belgians, with the British in the position that the Flemings have occupied for the past 175 years. Perhaps—and what an irony that would be—the people of Flanders, citizens of a nation designed to deny nationality, will become the forerunners of the countermovement, bringing down the Belgian construct and thereby proving that Europe as a federal superstate is a non-starter—the non-starter that Belgium, but for the Saxe-Coburgs on their gravy throne, would have been.

Belien was writing his conclusion about the time that the Flemish national party, the Vlams Blok, whose conservative wing was led by his wife, was being outlawed for advocating restrictions on immigration and abortion. Since then, the successor party, the Vlams Belang, has jettisoned the moral baggage that made it unique among Europe's national parties. Paul Belien, with his perfect grasp of English, should think of coming over to America, which is at least a decade behind Belgium.

Editor Thomas Fleming is the author, most recently, of The Morality of Everyday Life.

An Adversarial Culture

by Wayne Allensworth

Infiltration: How Muslim Spies and Subversives Have Penetrated Washington
by Paul Sperry
Nashville: Nelson Current; 328 pp., $24.99

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Following the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, John Walker Lindh, also known as Suleyman al-Faris and Abdul Farid, got his 15 minutes of fame the hard way. Or perhaps it is more proper to say that he was the object of a Two Minutes Hate by many on the right, even as his arrest brought on a knee-jerk defense reflex from many on the left. Some observers I respect made a case that Lindh/Al-Faris/Farid was not really guilty of treason, as many thought him to be (he eventually was sentenced to 20 years for, according to a CNN report, "supplying services to the Taliban" and fighting against U.S.-backed Northern Alliance forces; a "conspiracy to kill US nationals" charge was dropped), but the question that was barely explored may have been the most important one: Why did an American kid convert to Islam at age 16 and eventually join the Taliban?

Lindh spent his early years in Tacoma Park, Maryland. His father was a Catholic, working as a government lawyer. His mother worked in healthcare and became a Buddhist. John was one of three children, and his parents eventually separated and later divorced.

When John was ten, the family moved to ultraliberal Marin County, California, just north of San Francisco. John enrolled in what has been described as an "alternative school" for "self-directed students." He later told the FBI that he became interested in Islam after seeing the movie *Malcom* X. He started attending a mosque in Mill Valley, California, and adopted a Muslim name. His father was proud of him. Frank Lindh called John a "sweet kid" and thought the conversion had been good for him.

From there, John studied Islam in Yemen, then left for Pakistan in October 2000. In Pakistan, he became a student at an Islamic school, a *madrash*, and later joined the Taliban in Afghanistan, where he trained in an Al Qaeda camp and met Osama bin Laden. He was in the Taliban ranks on September 11, 2001. The Lindhs did not know that John was in Afghanistan until they saw their dazed son in U.S. custody on CNN.

His lawyer later stated that Lindh was "a soldier in the Taliban. He did it for religious reasons. He did it as a Muslim and history overcame him." His father said that "John loves America." But it is questionable that John Walker Lindh ever had a strong American identity. The point that was missing in all the coverage was that Lindh's saga can only be understood within the context of what the Nixon Center's Robert S. Leiken has dubbed the West's "adversarial culture." Lindh is simply not worth hating. He is another pathetic example of a civilization that has lost confidence in itself and produces lots of people with a very shallow sense of identity. Apparently, Islam provided Lindh/Al-Faris/Farid with an identity, giving him something he had sorely lacked in his life—and that is the most troubling aspect of the "American Taliban's" story.

Lindh's parents were justifiably the objects of harsh criticism from conservative commentators, who blamed everything on liberalism, plain and simple. Lindh's father could not have been much of a Catholic if he thought his son's conversion to Islam was good for him, and the boy's mother becoming a Buddhist (or "dabbling" in Buddhism, as some sources have it) indicates someone who has drifted pretty far afield from the historical norms of her society. However, "conservative" criticism never mentioned a capitalist culture, usually defended by the mainstream right, that inculcates a view of life as a series of consumer choices. It's a culture in which CEOs are encouraged not to think of their firms as American but "global." And Americans born and raised in the Good Ole U.S.A. replace their neighbors with "outsourced" foreigners and shop at "big-box" stores retailing Chinese-made goods, with hardly

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a pang of conscience.

In the 20th century, the West saw itself betrayed by the likes of Kim Philby, along with the other "Cambridge spies," and such groups as the Red Brigades, the Red Army Faction, and the Weathermen. The radicals and traitors had legions of sympathizers and fellow travelers in the elites of their own countries. Western individualism and rationalism, radicalized by the decline of Christianity; the curiosity of the Western mind, which lost its sense of context as it lost its religion; and a fascination with things foreign that is not quite like any that has been seen in other civilizations all contributed to the growth of a rootless, self-hating "adversarial culture," whose platform for attacking the civilization that produced it was Marxist-Leninist.

Whether or not Paul Sperry realizes it, the main point readers can take from his detailed, sometimes tedious (chiefly because of the Arabic names, which is not Mr. Sperry's fault), and outraged account of American weakness in the face of Islamic infiltration is that Western self-hatred may have found the perfect vehicle to replace Marxism-Leninism in a militant, resurgent Islam.

Sperry is honest in telling us that Islam itself is violent and threatening to the West and to America. You see, Sperry has taken the trouble to read the Koran:

> Islam does not mean "peace," as some maintain. It means "submission," a very different matter. And the core function of Muslims is to obtain submission from all for Allah, if necessary by force. Muslims are commanded to "fight" so the word of Allah can become supreme. It is just that simple. And the Quran clearly advocates violence against Christians and Jews. Wahhabism or Islamism is just Islam put into practice because it really does not advocate anything the Quran does not advocate itself.

"People," as Sperry notes, "do a lot of things in the name of religion that their religion does not really call for. Unfortunately, most Muslim terrorists are not guilty of this . . . "

Sperry enumerates what he calls the "Top Ten Myths of Islam," which include the familiar slogan "Islam is a religion of peace," as well as the misleading "Jihad means inner struggle against sin" and the truly disturbing "Allah is the same God of the Bible." He questions the sincerity of U.S. Muslim leaders' claims that Islam does not condone terrorism and points out that a "white lie" that furthers the Islamic cause is not considered a sin, which pertains to the statements of Muslims following September 11 that Bin Laden's Al Qaeda broke the tenets of Islam. (*Chronicles* readers are already well informed on that score by Srdja Trifkovic, author of *The Sword of the Prophet*, which Sperry references in his book.)

The bulk of *Infiltration* details how overlapping Islamic networks, using "charities" (fronts financing radical groups), schools (bringing up a new generation of jihadists), foundations (another front), and mosques (recruiting grounds for jihadists) have infiltrated the United States and the U.S. government, including the White House, Congress, and the very agencies charged with defending our country.

The book contains chapters on the Washington-based "nerve center" of Islamic activity ("The Wahhabi Corridor"); the leveraging of political correctness to have Islam recognized as part of a bogus "Judeo-Christian-Islamic" tradition ("Interfaith Phoniness"); how Muslims have effectively lobbied Congress and how political correctness, especially the failure to use religious and ethnic profiling, has enabled radical Muslims to penetrate our legislature and American security and law-enforcement agencies ("Institutionalized PC"). The author does not spare the U.S. prison system, where Muslim imams are spreading the faith, or the U.S. nuclear program, which, according to Sperry, is vulnerable to Islamic infiltration.

Sperry takes on CAIR (the Council on American-Islamic Relations) and, to his credit, does not refrain from blasting the Bush White House, underscoring the President's dangerous obsession with pretending that Islam itself is not a threat—perhaps because the best friend of his political Svengali Karl Rove is a pro-Muslim lobbyist and because of GOP strategist Grover Norquist, who may have convinced Bush that he won the 2000 election because of the "Islamic vote." This is in addition both to the fact that Muslims have gained positions within the White House and to the Bush-friendly Saudi Arabian connections to militant Islam.

When Sperry likens questioning religiously and ethnically profiled government employees to the Cold War-era's "Have you now or ever been a member of the Communist Party?" he cuts closest to the bone—yet misses the real point. The Washington Sperry describes sounds suspiciously like the one the Soviets infiltrated with sympathizers and outright spies. The Americans—native born and naturalized, many of them not of Middle Eastern origin—who champion Islam bear a marked resemblance to the fellow-traveler template, if not to Alger Hiss himself. Where once there was a "Red Menace," there is now a Green Menace, but neither could have menaced us at all but for a spiritual disease that produces fellow travelers and Islamic converts in our own midst.

Sperry notes that Muslims often seek native-born Americans not of Middle Eastern origin to do their dirty work, so as to dodge future profiling. An alarming number of converts to Islam are American blacks. Sperry's accounts of the Islamic recruitment of prisoners (mostly among blacks, but also among Latinos) and even of Asian-Americans points to the "adversarial" culture that produced John Walker Lindh. But the anecdotal evidence presented by Sperry points to another problem, which is the possibility of ethnic and racial minorities becoming a ready audience for the Islamic version of anti-American/anti-Western/anti-Christian and antiwhite ideology.

This brings us to the second dog that doesn't bark in Sperry's book: immigration. The question that is implicitly raised but not answered in *Infiltration* brings us full circle. *Why are they here in the first place?* Could Islamic jihadist ideology (and Sperry, following Srdja Trifkovic's lead, does see Islam as an all-encompassing ideology) gain such a strong foothold in our country (or in any other Western state) already weakened by an identity crisis and an accompanying loss of resolve if a policy of nearly open borders were not operative? That question has already been answered. The hoards of immigrants are here in the first place *because* America and the West are in the midst of an identity crisis and have a weakened self-defense instinct. That Paul Sperry, who is appropriately outraged by what he sees, cannot bring himself to ask those questions tells us all we need to know about how we arrived at the point where a very informative book such as *Infiltration* can be written.

The social, spiritual, and structural problems inherent in modern societies have disrupted the socialization of our people, producing generations of Ameri-

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cans and Europeans alienated from their traditional cultures and civilization. How can we even hope to assimilate and socialize waves of immigrants from vastly different cultures and civilizations (a very dicey proposition in any case) when it is our own children who are in need of assimilation and socialization? If Al Qaeda can recruit John Walker Lindh, how many Third Worlders will sympathize with, or even join, the *jihad*?

In an article in the July/August 2005 number of *Foreign Affairs* ("Europe's Angry Muslims"), Robert Leiken looks at the growth of militant Islam in Europe (where we have seen the results in the bombings that, last summer, shook "Londonistan"). Leiken points out that having been born and reared a citizen of Germany, France, the United Kingdom, or the Netherlands does not mean that the second- and third-generation Muslim citizen is especially loyal. Many of them are susceptible to jihadist indoctrination. In short, they are being integrated into the host country's "adversarial culture." But *Infiltration* underscores another alarming phenomenon at work: Adversarial immigrants are converting us to their own hostile ideology even as they colonize America and the West.

Contributing editor Wayne Allensworth is the author of The Russian Question *(Rowan & Littlefield).*

The Path Not Taken

by H.A. Scott Trask

McClellan's War: The Failure of Moderation in the Struggle for the Union
by Ethan S. Rafuse
Bloomington: Indiana University Press; 525 pp., $35.00

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Walt Whitman remarked after it was over that "the real war will never get in the books," and, despite all the volumes that have been written since then, his prediction remains largely true, but not entirely so: Ethan Rafuse has written an important book that rescues George B. McClellan's military reputation and demonstrates that he was removed from command because he stood for policies—moderation, conciliation, statesmanship—that were anathema to the Lincoln administration.

We are familiar with McClellan's historical reputation: indecisive, timid, politically ambitious, vainglorious. It is as old as the war, created by the Republicans, perpetuated by the postwar historians of Northern righteousness (*e.g.*, James Ford Rhodes), and sustained by the neo-abolitionists of the school of America the Virtuous. (See, for example, Stephen Sears' 1988 biography and the scribblings of the official gatekeeper of Civil War history, James McPherson.)

McClellan never squandered the lives of his men, and they loved him for it. By contrast, Grant's famed strategic genius consisted in little more than throwing his men against Lee's lines and having a great bloodletting—calculating, correctly, that the South could not win a war of attrition. That his strategy worked is undeniable, but one wonders what his men really thought of it or of the general who turned them from soldiers into cannon fodder.

Rafuse begins with a close study of the formative influences on McClellan. The first was his father, a Yale-educated physician, Episcopalian, member of Philadelphia's patriciate, conservative Whig, and close friend of Sen. John M. Clayton of Delaware. West Point was the other. There, McClellan excelled. He was a natural leader, a popular cadet, and a diligent student who graduated second in his class, which demonstrates something important, besides his intelligence and self-discipline: He learned and remembered what he was taught.

Rafuse believes two courses to have been determinative. The first was Denis Hart Mahan's class on military engineering and the science of war. Mahan counseled the cadets to eschew tactics that would incur high casualties, such as frontal assaults on entrenched positions. He reasoned that massive bloodletting would arouse public passions, intensifying and prolonging wars, and lead to political interference in military decisions. He taught them to outmaneuver their enemy, to advance methodically, to fight from behind fortifications whenever possible, and to besiege or bypass enemy redoubts.

The second course was in moral philosophy, taught in the senior year and using as a text Francis Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science*. Wayland, an American follower of Scottish Common Sense philosophy and faculty theology, taught moral lessons that can only be described as the antithesis of New England Puritanism, including its many 19th-century manifestations. While faculty psychology emphasized the mastery of passion and the ascendancy of reason, Common Sense philosophy advocated moderation in all things, consensus building, tolerance of differing opinions, forbearance rather than impetuosity, leading by example, and reasoned appeals to the mind and conscience over "rhetoric that attacked the motives and morality of others."

It is easy to see why Whigs educated in this tradition would decline membership in the new Republican Party, with its divisive rhetoric (an "irrepressible conflict"), its allegation of conspiracy ("the slave power"), its rejection of compromise, its winner-take-all program, and its appeals to popular fears and passions. Indeed, when the antislavery Whigs gained ascendancy in the Pennsylvania party in 1851, the McClellans became Democrats. It also explains why Whigs of this stamp (*e.g.*, Sen. Daniel Webster, whom McClellan revered, naming his favorite horse "Dan Webster") could be opposed to abolitionism without supporting slavery. During the war, McClellan foresaw slavery dissolving with the advance of the Union armies and believed that a Northern victory assured its demise, rendering a proclamation of emancipation unnecessary and gratuitous. He also feared it could be dangerous, inflaming Southern pride and inciting slave revolts.

McClellan's patrician upbringing, Whiggish education, and West Point training had another consequence. He believed (in his own words) that the war should be "conducted according to the established usage of civilized nations," which meant, first and foremost, that "efforts should be directed towards crushing the armed masses of the rebels, not against the people." That was the very definition of civilized warfare, and McClellan made it clear to his troops from the beginning that they were expected to respect civilians and their property and abstain from all forms of abuse or depredation. When any troops violated his orders, McClellan punished them, believing (correctly) that failure to do so would be interpreted as tacit approval and lead to more and worse abuses. So, when a company in General Rosecrans' brigade robbed the home of a pro-secession woman in Western Virginia in July 1861, McClellan discharged them from service,

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but not before ordering them to surrender their arms in front of the whole regiment, a humiliation. Naturally, this did not sit well with the Republicans, who wanted to punish *all* Southerners and institute the barbaric tactic of total war, which they would do once McClellan was out of the way.

McClellan believed a moderate but firm policy would bring about an early end to the war. If Northern soldiers behaved with restraint, and if the war effort were directed solely against the armies, the government could regain the loyalty of Southern citizens. The opposite course would only inspire hatred, widen the sectional rift, and cause Southerners to fight longer and harder, postponing reconciliation. McClellan thought it equally important that the government avoid risky, ill-prepared, or premature offensives, as any repulse would boost Southern morale and encourage further resistance. This explains why he was so cautious on the offensive. Once Southerners were persuaded that they could not hope to defeat the North, and that giving up would not be ruinous, they would return to their allegiance. As Rafuse demonstrates, wherever the strategy of conciliation was followed (Western Virginia, Virginia's eastern shore, coastal North Carolina), it succeeded. Where it was not followed (Missouri, where rabid Republican abolitionists, such as Nathaniel Lyon and John C. Fremont, were in command), the result was guerrilla war.

McClellan's troubles began when some Democratic papers in early 1862 began touting him as a presidential candidate in 1864. This was not his doing, but it sealed his fate. The Republicans in Congress and the White House realized that they had a problem: Were McClellan to capture Richmond, he would pose a serious threat to Lincoln's reelection. In other words, military victory in 1862 meant political defeat in 1864. They could not demote McClellan, however: He was too popular and respected, and they had no reason they could give for doing so. Their only way out of this dilemma was for McClellan and the Army of the Potomac to fail. And it appears that Lincoln and his new secretary of war, Edwin M. Stanton, deliberately sabotaged McClellan's peninsular campaign. Rafuse is not so bold as to make this argument, but his evidence supports it.

Rafuse believes that McClellan was right to advance on Richmond from the east, *via* the peninsula between the James and York Rivers, as opposed to the overland route favored by the administration. It was shorter, had fewer natural obstacles, and could be supplied and reinforced easily by sea, but it was McClellan's plan, and that doomed it. At the onset of the campaign, the President, after assuring McClellan otherwise, transferred Blenker's division to General Fremont in the Shenandoah Valley; then he withheld McDowell's Corps (for the defense of Washington, he claimed). That was 50,000 troops. A member of his staff told him: "General, the authorities at Washington are painfully afraid that you will succeed in taking Richmond, and therefore are stripping your army in the beginning."

So, when the Seven Days battles commenced in late June, McClellan, on the offensive, was outnumbered (101,000 to 112,000). These engagements hardly amounted to the decisive repulse they are sometimes described as. McClellan's command suffered fewer casualties than did the Confederates (15,849 to 20,614), little equipment or supplies were lost, and his new position on the James River was secure; with reinforcements, he could have resumed the offensive in August. The President's decision to terminate the campaign and withdraw McClellan's army was *not* a military one. Gen. John Pope's Army of Virginia was ready to march south. Richmond would be taken by a Republican general, or not at all. Pope also issued orders that essentially authorized the plundering of civilians and the destruction of property. The reign of arson and theft had begun. When McClellan heard of the new policy, he was appalled and vowed never to carry it out: "I will not permit this army to degenerate into a mob of thieves." He later sent a letter of rebuke to Lincoln: The war "should be conducted according to the highest principles known to Christian civilization. It should not be . . . a War upon population; but against armed forces and political organizations."

I have a few criticisms. The subtitle is misleading: McClellan's strategy of moderation did not *fail*; it was *rejected*. The first two chapters of the book are encumbered with an unnecessary scholarly apparatus that reads like a comprehensive exam for a Ph.D. in history. Rafuse ends his book in the fall of 1862. He tries to justify this, but there is no excuse for not including at least one chapter on McClellan's 1864 presidential campaign.

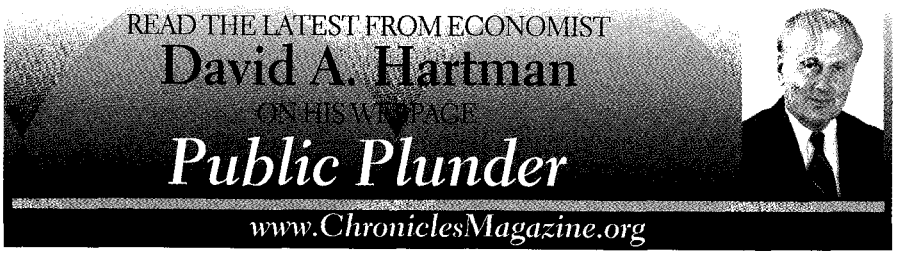
And Rafuse alleges that McClellan thought that Capt. Charles Wilkes, commanding the USS *San Jacinto*, acted properly when he stopped the British mail-packet *Trent* off Cuba and seized the two Confederate envoys on board (James Mason and John Slidell). On the contrary, McClellan thought it a gross violation of international law. He wrote his wife after it happened: "Our Govt has done wrong in seizing these men on a neutral ship: the only manly way of getting out of the scrape is a prompt release with a frank avowal of the wrong."

Finally, Rafuse errs by giving a literal reading to McClellan's next paragraph:

> I have just returned from Stanton's where I have had a long discussion on the law points of the M & S capture. I am surprised to find that our Govt is fully justified by all the rules of International Law & all the decision in the highest courts which bear upon the case—so it matters but little whether the English Govt & people make a fuss about it or not, for as we are manifestly & undoubtedly in the right it makes little difference to us, as we can afford to fight in a just cause.

McClellan is using irony to devastating effect to puncture the self-righteousness and ignorant boasting of the Lincoln administration. We have since become very used to that kind of thing.

H.A. Scott Trask is the author of "Condy Raguet and the Northern Laissez-Faire, State-Rights Tradition," soon to be submitted for publication, and is at work on his Civil War book, "Copperheads and Conservatives: The Northern Antiwar Movement, 1861-65."



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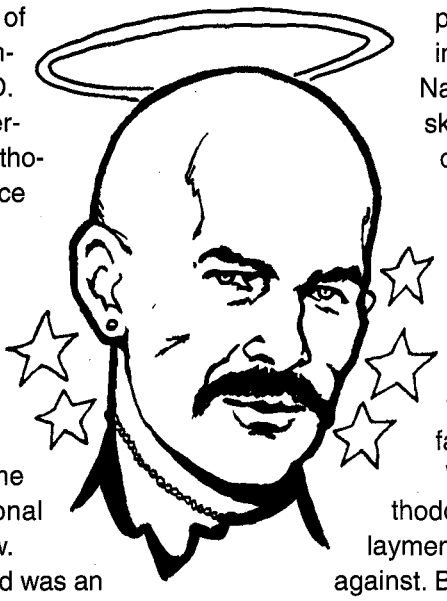
Introducing Saint Gay

Gaylord lived with his domestic partner, Rexford, in a nice house. The grass was always clipped and there were no oil stains on the driveway.

Gaylord, a Catholic, had learned from Bishop Tom Bumbleton that his homosexuality was not a disorder, but a gift from God. Bishop Bumbleton also urged gay Catholics to "come out," so Gaylord did. The bishop also said that homosexual sex can be moral. If a bishop says so, it's gotta be true. Right?

Gaylord was an active member of his parish. He was a eucharistic minister, and taught both RCIA and CCD. He helped his parish come to understand that although the Bible and Catholic tradition call homosexual practice a sin, it's not really that at all.



Alas, Gaylord died a terrible death. He walked into a bar and innocently propositioned a guy, who, pretending to be gay, took him to a local by-the-hour motel, and slit his throat.

When the media got a hold of the story, they made Gaylord a national hero. It was a hate crime, you know.

When it was revealed that Gaylord was an active Catholic, a group of Jesuits launched a campaign to make the martyred Gaylord a saint, confident of success since that backward Polish pope was dead and gone. Part of the campaign was to place a St. Gay's Feast Day on the Church Calendar, in honor of St. Gaylord and all victims of gay-bashing, making it a Holy Day of Obligation to coincide with America's National Coming-Out Day.

If you think this is preposterous, you're simply unaware of how powerful the Lavender Mafia and its allies are in the priesthood and episcopate.

The *Dallas Morning News* reported that, prior to the priestly sex scandals of 2002, two-thirds of America's bishops were involved in covering up priestly pedophilia, the vast majority being homosexual in nature. And even after the sex scandals of 2002, Gov. Frank Keating of the National Review Board — charged with monitoring the bishops in regard to pedophilia — said that certain bishops behave like La Cosa Nostra in their continuing attempts to protect pedophile priests. With that remark, he was in effect erased as Chairman of the National Review Board by certain thin-skinned bishops, a remark Keating (a devout Catholic) later said was "deadly accurate."

While the bishops have been forced to adopt a get-tough policy regarding "sexual abuse of minors," that policy does not affect sexual activity by priests with adult men and fellow priests. What you've seen so far is only the tip of the iceberg.

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, an orthodox Catholic monthly magazine run by laymen, know what loyal Catholics are up against. Before we became Catholic, we were Episcopalian, and we watched the more genteel Episcopalian branch of the Lavender Mafia, with its feminist allies, take over that Church and destroy its Christian integrity. We've seen it happen. Trust us: The Catholic Church in the U.S. is in grave peril.

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by Philip Jenkins

The Book of Judith

As 2005 drew to a close, the scandal over the outing of CIA agent Valerie Plame potentially threatened to overwhelm leading figures in the Bush White House. Meanwhile, editors and journalists have been struggling to keep a straight face while affecting shock at the central revelation of the case—namely, that major news stories commonly derive from leaks within government and that, in most cases, such leaks are explicitly designed to damage some rival faction or tarnish some troublesome individual. This obvious fact is so embarrassing because it so starkly discredits the Woodstein myth, the Watergate-era image of heroic investigative journalists struggling to discover and publish the truth at whatever risk to their own safety.

Yet while the Plame scandal thus shows us nothing new, it does remind us of some of the critical skills we need to apply when reading or viewing virtually any news story that depends on official sources—and that means, basically, all of them. Speaking personally, this recognition is *déjà vu* all over again. From the late 1980's, I taught a college course on terrorism and always found wonderful mileage from a detailed reading of a *New York Times* analysis of one particular incident from that wave of international carnage. This was the savage 1985 attack on Istanbul's Neve Shalom synagogue, in which dozens of worshipers were slaughtered. That the attackers were Muslim scarcely seemed to demand proof, but which specific group was responsible? And which country, if any, had served as sponsor—and would likely become the target of U.S. or European retaliation?

All these questions were addressed and, seemingly, solved in a stunning exposé that appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* on January 4, 1986—a lengthy article on "The Istanbul Synagogue Massacre" by one Judith Miller, who has recently hit the headlines as a conduit of official misinformation. At the time, though, everything about her synagogue article carried conviction, with its photos of weapons and ammunition used in the blast, its Photofit pictures of the participants, and the confidential interviews with a dazzling array of diplomats and spooks, few quoted by name. The reader was seemingly led directly into the rococo world of international terrorism and espionage, through which Miller served as expert cicerone. This looked not so much like a magazine article as a confidential intelligence file that had somehow leaked into the publication.

In such a setting, the reader was unlikely to challenge Miller's conclusions. Two men had entered the synagogue, armed with machine pistols and grenades, and had locked the doors behind them, indicating that this would be a suicide attack. After massacring worshipers, the two exploded their bombs, killing themselves and the remaining victims. The suicidal nature of the attack was critical to Miller's interpretation, which firmly laid the blame at the feet of Shiite radicals, presumably from Lebanon, but likely working for the Iranian secret services. A further culprit was Iran's ally Syria, which also had close dealings with the Lebanese radicals. Whatever the identity of the actual shooters and bombers, the chief guilt obviously attached to the deadly triangle of Iran, Syria, and Lebanese Hezbollah. And as one anonymous terrorism expert was quoted in Miller's story (How are you these days, Mr. Netanyahu?), the only way of preventing future atrocities was by retaliating against states that sponsored and commissioned such horrors. The message: Sanction Syria, and penalize Iran.

Accepting that particular version would represent wonderful news for various forces in the political world and the intelligence community, not least the U.S. administration, anxious to keep up pressure on Iran and Syria at a critical phase in the Iran-Iraq War. Israel, of course, gained from increasingly tight sanctions against its deadly enemy, Syria. Another beneficiary would be Turkey herself, which could attribute this act of terrorism to purely external forces without the slightest connections with local Muslims. Moreover, the fact that all the terrorists were dead meant that Turkish police could not be criticized for failing to capture any survivors or accomplices. Is it any wonder, then, that Miller's story earned her a red-carpet entreé into the back offices of the U.S., Israeli, and Turkish intelligence services, all of whom had a story to tell and wanted to ensure that they were speaking to someone who would recount it exactly as they specified?

Because oddly, there was another story, which ran contrary to Miller's tale of suicidal Syrians. We find it, for example, in the excellent 1987 biography of Abu Nidal by Israeli writer Yossi Melman, *The Master Terrorist*, a work that often shows rich access to Israeli intelligence sources. According to these sources—rather than the ones who talked to Miller—the incident had a completely different context. According to Melman, several men attacked the synagogue, and they had no intention of becoming martyrs. After the worshipers had been murdered, police arrived on the scene, and some of the attackers made their getaway. Two hapless terrorists locked themselves in the synagogue, where one pulled the pin on a grenade—accidentally or otherwise, we will never know. If this was not a suicide attack, that removes any reason to link it to Hezbollah, or to the Lebanese or Iranians. Melman, instead, unequivocally links the attack to "Abu Nidal," which was the transparent *nom de guerre* adopted by the Iraqi secret services when conducting international atrocities. At the time, of course, Iraq was very much a U.S. ally, a bastion against monstrous Iran. Many, many reasons existed why Western intelligence agencies should have wanted to publicize an alternative story, if they could find a sufficiently uncritical journalist and a credulous newspaper.

Two decades later, the synagogue-massacre story still teaches valuable lessons about reading the news. Always look for the sources behind any story, ask what their motives were in providing this information, and never forget the crucial question: *Cui Bono*? To whose benefit? ◁

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by Scott P. Richert

True Love Ways

For the past 40 years, Rockford's Midtown district has seen more downs than ups. Centered on Seventh Street from First Avenue to Broadway, southeast of the main part of downtown, Midtown—once a bustling commercial and cultural center at the heart of a Swedish neighborhood—was, for far too long, a haven for prostitution and drug use. Readers may recall that an "adult" bookstore on Seventh Street provided the sordid backdrop for the murder of Richard Misslich in 1985, an event that played a major role in my July 2002 column, "*Cui Bono*?" But Misslich's murder just scratches the surface of the problems that once plagued the neighborhood.

In recent years, however, Midtown has been making a comeback, through the efforts of a variety of actors—most notably the Midtown District Association, headed by Bill Mohr, and other local organizations, including Zion Development. The massive expansion of the campus of Swedish-American Hospital, located northeast of Midtown, and the city's simultaneous decision to reroute Charles Street south of the hospital (and to pay for the construction entirely with Midtown TIF district funds, over Bill Mohr's objection) have made some difference as well. While there are still too many vacant storefronts (especially at the southern end of the strip), restaurants and specialty shops that have opened on the northern end are, for the most part, making a go of it.

One tenant of Seventh Street for over a decade now has been Rockford Urban Ministries (RUM), a program of the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church. Founded in 1962, RUM has been run for the past 21 years by Stanley Campbell, a local activist who claims once to have been the youngest member of the Winnebago County chapter of the John Birch Society. His political views changed after a tour of duty in Vietnam (for which he volunteered), and today, Stanley proudly proclaims himself "Rockford's only paid radical."

One of the first controversies I remember from when I moved to Rockford ten years ago was a picket, held on the federal Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday, across the street from the *Chronicles* offices. The University Club, a private organization, was debating whether to accept women as members, and Stanley and his fellow picketers (none of whom, as I recall, were members of the University Club) picked King Day to make their opinion heard. (We were, of course, at work that day, and Stanley's ever-present bullhorn was more than a little distracting.)

Under Stanley's direction, RUM has organized many programs, including Rockford's CROP Walk and an outdoor Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, but none has been as controversial as Harm Reduction Outreach, a needle-exchange and condom-distribution program that, for ten years, has been run out of an unmarked building on the southern end of the Seventh Street strip, where Stanley has also made his home and RUM's office. Critics have blamed the program for the continued presence of drug users and prostitutes in the neighborhood, and Stanley himself frankly admits that many of the used needles that litter the area come from the program's office. But he adamantly claims that the program does more good than harm, pointing to federal studies that show that such programs reduce the spread of disease.

Most important, in his mind, is the possibility that the program helps to keep individual users and prostitutes alive longer, so that they can change their behavior. Those same federal studies, however, are a little less convincing on this point, but Stanley's got an answer for that, too: Most "harm reduction" programs, he argues, deliberately shy away from drug counseling (or even from referring users to counseling programs) because they are focused exclusively on stopping the spread of disease. Renamed "THAT Place" when its current director, JBryan Latham (who had run a program by the same name in Rock Island, Illinois), took over, RUM's program, Stanley argues, uses needles and condoms as "carrots" to get people through the door. Once there—or, rather, once they have been coming through the door for at least three to four months (according to Stanley)—they are given the opportunity to be referred to a counseling program.

If we were to judge solely by the statements of the program's critics, let alone its supporters, we might be led to conclude that (moral questions aside) the program "works." Even most of those who have objected to its location on Seventh Street, or complained about the health hazard that dirty needles and used condoms pose to others in the neighborhood, are quick to declare that they "support the program," that it is "needed," and that it "does good."

This unwillingness to criticize the very idea behind the program helps explain why it has, for a decade now, largely sailed under the radar. Until recently, the biggest controversy surrounding the needle exchange may have been when the program began operating out of a mobile unit, and the United Methodist bishop for Northern Illinois came to town to bless the vehicle. By its very nature, that act raised the fundamental moral issue that Stanley and his fellow activists normally (and wisely, for their purposes) avoid: Is it ever right to do good (save or extend lives) by providing people with instruments (needles and condoms) with which they are going to do evil (shoot up and fornicate)?

Surprisingly, when I put the question to Stanley in those terms after he picks me up at the *Chronicles* offices for an interview over lunch, he doesn't flinch. I had expected him to argue that the needle exchange is not a question of the ends justifying the means, because the means (in his mind) are themselves good, but instead, he argues that the end does indeed justify the use of means that he personally considers immoral. Those who say that such means should never be used "are saying that you want these people to die." When I point out that I want these people not to die but to live drug-free and off the

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streets, he replies that "Just Say No" has been a failure—as if the only alternative to simplistic Republican sloganeering is a program that, whatever its ultimate aim, is giving desperate people a dangerously false sense of security as they continue to engage in physically and spiritually destructive behavior.

The proponents of needle-exchange programs—in Rockford and elsewhere—very carefully frame the debate in medical language, and their opponents are too often unable themselves to recognize that a medical argument ("This may save or extend his life") does not invalidate or even undercut the moral argument ("This may mean the loss of his soul"). This is the same reason why those who challenge the viral theory of AIDS (whatever the merit of their alternative theories) often arouse such anger even among (or perhaps, especially among) non-physicians: It's comforting to believe that our infirmities result from a fundamentally external cause to which an external solution can be applied. Acknowledging that our problems are rooted instead in our own behavior requires us to be open to a conversion (religious or otherwise) before we can have any hope of recovery.

Part of what has made Stanley Campbell such a well-known and (often grudgingly) respected figure in Rockford is that, unlike the conservative stereotype of a radical, he does not seem an immoral man. If anything, he suffers from an excessive moralism. Prohibition, he admits, would be his weapon of choice against all addictions—to drugs, to alcohol, to gambling. He's proud of working for a church that has had a long history of supporting prohibition and temperance. At one point, when I argue that we're too quick today to classify as "addiction" any abuse of alcohol and to claim that the only solution is abstinence, he asks me, in all seriousness, if I might be talking about myself.

How does such moralism translate into support for what, by any traditional measure, is an immoral program? When I point out that many churches manage to minister to drug addicts and prostitutes without condoning their behavior, he, at first, argues that this program reaches people that the churches cannot reach precisely because they won't provide them with needles or condoms, but then he segues into a moralistic attack on what he regards as the moralism of institutional Christianity: "The Church, first of all, is selfish. The Church is condemnatory. The Church loves to condemn." He quickly adds that he means churches in general, not one specific church, but he won't comment on whether that includes the Methodists who underwrite RUM.

In other words, his hatred for others' moralism is just the flip-side of his own. We come back, time and again, to the question of whether it might be possible to minister to THAT Place's clientele without further enabling their destructive behavior, and his answer, always delivered passionately, is invariably the same: "I'm not going to stand on the corner and yell at them and tell them that they're going to go to Hell, because that's going to drive them away."

Scripture, I remind him, provides an alternative to such moralism. John, in his Gospel, relates the story of the scribes and Pharisees bringing the adulteress before Christ, Who tells them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." After making a silly joke about Mary ("Suddenly, a stone flew through the air, and Jesus said, 'Mom, what are you doing?'"), Stanley triumphantly declares that I have made his point—"They wished to do her harm, and Jesus prevented it." But the story, I point out, doesn't end there. What did Christ do once the scribes and Pharisees all left, and the woman remained before him—hand her some sheep intestine and say, "Make sure you're safe"? No, Stanley admits, quietly and after a pause, "He told her, 'Go, and sin no more.'"

Still, Stanley insists that the drug users and prostitutes that THAT Place serves are going to persist in their behavior, at least in the short run, and that providing them with needles and condoms is, therefore, a form of "love" that conquers all objections. Even though Stanley opposes drug legalization, Harm Reduction Outreach accepted $70,000 in funding between 2000 and 2002 from the Fund for Drug Policy Reform of the Tides Foundation, a self-proclaimed progressive organization that received $15,751,750 from George Soros's Open Society Institute from 1997 to 2003. (The Tides Foundation was, by a factor of five, the largest recipient of OSI funds in that period.) Soros, of course, has pumped millions of dollars into drug-legalization efforts in the United States and elsewhere.

The needle-exchange program might have continued for several more years at a low level of controversy, but for two events: first, the decision by RUM and THAT Place to take advantage of the revival on the north end of Seventh Street by moving the needle exchange and the RUM offices (and a fair-trade store that RUM has been running for a few years now) to a building on the corner of Seventh Street and First Avenue; and second, the end of a quarter-century of Democratic control of city hall with the election of Larry Morrissey, an independent, as mayor in April 2004.

The decision to move the needle-exchange program to a more prominent location aroused opposition among merchants and residents along the Seventh Street corridor, who believed that the new location would reverse the progress being made in the neighborhood. Mayor Morrissey, who campaigned in part on reviving downtown, directed his administration to take a closer look at the zoning under which the needle exchange has been operating. In the process, as Mayor Morrissey told Chuck Sweeny of the *Rockford Register Star*, "Our zoning folks couldn't find there was ever a request to run a needle exchange.... They were just doing it." Under two successive Democratic administrations, city hall had apparently turned a blind eye for the past decade.

No longer. In early November, the city's legal department notified THAT Place that they were in violation of the city's zoning codes and ordinances. When JBryan Latham continued to run the program out of a back door of the new building, the city threatened legal action. This wouldn't be the first time that JBryan Latham fell afoul of the law: His operation in Rock Island was involuntarily shut down after it failed to file an annual report with the secretary of state's office.

The program, Stanley assures me, is now shut down until they can find a new location that meets city zoning—or until they can revive the mobile program. That reminds me of a long-standing rumor: that the mobile program was shut down after the former director was busted for selling drugs out of the mobile unit. Not true, says Stanley, though he acknowledges that the former director was let go for personal reasons. Then he volunteers some amazing information: A study found that 95 percent of ex-users who later work at a needle-exchange program become users again.

Doesn't that, I ask, call into question the effectiveness of such programs? It's a sobering thought, even for Stanley, who ends our meal uncharacteristically quiet. ◁©▷

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Letter From Barcelona

by Brian Kirkpatrick

The Mulberry Graveyard

◆

Spain is a country with strong regional identities. The central government recognizes four official languages: Spanish, Galician, Basque, and Catalan. The people in the "periphery" of Spain may refer to Spanish as Castilian, to distinguish it from their own language. In the Basque country, Catalonia, and Galicia, signs in the regional language are omnipresent. At least two million people speak Galician (estimates run as high as four million), and perhaps seven million speak Catalan. Galician and Basque have their own Royal Academies that rule on usage, and Galician is more closely related to Portuguese than to Spanish.

In the northeastern corner of Spain, Catalonia and its capital, Barcelona, have a long history of periods of autonomy or outright independence alternating with suppression of the Catalan language and culture. One can see Barcelona's leftist stance in the Spanish Civil War of the 1930's as another attempt by the Catalans to preserve their autonomy. Under Francisco Franco, who ruled the country after the right won the Civil War, it was illegal to use Catalan in public. One political leader gained a jail term and lifelong popularity by serenading the dictator in Catalan. Only after Franco died in 1975 did the language begin its long climb back to health, with legal recognition of Catalan and even, in many realms, legal preference.

Recently, when my job took me to Barcelona, my friends kept returning to the topic of the distinctive identity of the Catalans. Celso, a former research fellow at the center where I work, had told me stories of the favoritism and nepotism he encountered in Madrid when he returned to Spain after his training. But, he said, such things usually didn't happen in Catalonia. He described the Catalans as the hardest-working of the Spanish and the least likely to be promoted on the basis of time serving.

My friend Emilio took me on a walking tour to his favorite sites in the city, which sits on a long coastal strip that slopes up from the Mediterranean to the nearby hills. The first site was a *rambla*, a long series of outdoor stalls and kiosks in the middle of a broad street. Guidebooks usually refer to this *rambla* as if it were the only one, but we passed through others on our tour. At the first, we stopped in front of one stall with several birdcages. Many of the small birds were singing. "This," Emilio said, smiling, "is very Catalan."

Barcelona is noted for its architecture, and Emilio concentrated on the buildings, the most famous of which were designed by Antoni Gaudí i Cornet in the late-19th and early-20th century. Gaudí declared war on straight lines and clean surfaces, covering his buildings' exteriors with stone seedpods, blossoms, pineapples, mushrooms, and pine cones. In the modern shopping district, the Casa Milà, which the people of Barcelona call the Quarry, has a facing of stone in frozen waves. The roof offers a wonderful view of the city, but the tourist must first adjust to the gigantic chimneys shaped like stone knights that loom threateningly above. Gaudí's unfinished Sagrada Familia cathedral has become a medieval project in scope, its slow progress financed by private donations, and generations of artisan families have spent their working lives on it. Many photos of Gaudí's buildings can be found on the internet, but beware: You will start pricing tickets once you have seen them. Whether Barcelona's eccentric style is beautiful or not, there is no other architecture like it in the world.

Within walking distance of some of Gaudí's most famous works is the Gothic Quarter, a maze of dark buildings from the 14th and 15th centuries where narrow streets spill out into brick-paved squares. The building housing Catalonia's regional government—the Palau de la Generalitat—stands on the Plaça de Sant Jaume, with a vaulted ceiling, visible from the plaza, that is painted à la the Sistine Chapel.

It was dark when Emilio led me down another narrow street in the Gothic Quarter that opened onto a small plaza. The back of a 14th-century church was on one side of the plaza, and the small open space was dominated by a curving metal structure reminiscent of a tree—or a gallows—where a triangular area covered in brick gently sloped down to a low wall. On the wall, an inscription in Catalan read, "In the mulberry graveyard not a single traitor is buried; even if we lose our flags it will be the urn of their honor."

I stood on the bricks as I examined the inscription, while Emilio explained that, in 1714, the city had fallen to the army of the Spanish central government. When the Castilian army stormed Barcelona, the Catalans fought house to house until they were overcome. The Bourbon victor placed a permanent garrison in the city and banned the Catalan language. Thus ended the War of the Spanish Succession and another brief period of the Catalans' independence—with a Castilian boot on their neck.

The Catalan soldiers who had died defending the city were buried in a mass grave where I was standing, in the Mulberry Graveyard. Realizing I was standing on the soldiers' grave, I stepped back.

The day Barcelona fell—September 11—is the national patriotic holiday for Catalonia, their Fourth of July. Emilio joked that only Catalans would celebrate a loss. I didn't tell him that, on that point, he was certainly wrong, for many other peoples also remember great defeats. The Serbs commemorate their loss on the Field of Blackbirds, and, in elementary school in Texas, I'd had to memorize Travis' letter from the doomed garrison at the Alamo. Faulkner was acutely aware of his people's defeat at Gettysburg: "For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon."

When I think of the Mulberry Graveyard, I think of Dr. A——. Emilio kept warning me about my meeting with him: He was difficult; he didn't like Americans; he was very obsessive; he was very Catalan. Dr. A—— and I had no problem when we met, and my hour with him passed quickly. He told me about his work, but he also told me about the experience of growing up with the language that he spoke at home and with his friends having been banned from his school and all public use. I said that my conclusion from his experience was that it was important not to lose your war, as Catalonia had lost to Franco. He replied that he thought the conclusion was not to have a war. I

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argued with him, but to understand my point of view, it may help to know about two experiences—among many—that I'd had, echoes of another war.

Around the time of my visit to Barcelona, I was flirting with a job in Dallas. The woman who was recruiting me asked, more than once, whether I was really willing to move to, well, *Texas*. I told her the prospect didn't bother me, so she asked if my wife would mind. Finally, she asked me why I would want to leave Maryland—not in the sense of changing jobs, but as if I were living in Paradise and had decided to move to Hell. I thought Dallas sounded good. It sounded like home.

I told her she didn't need to apologize for Texas. I was from there, I said. I could have added that my mother's people had been in East Texas and Louisiana for 200 years—they even fought in That War—but something told me not to.

Through the local gossipy kid, one of our daughter's friends, the whole neighborhood found out that we might move. When the ladies in the neighborhood ran into my wife, they told her not to go. She wouldn't like the South, they said; it wasn't like Maryland. "It's almost a different country," one of the women said.

Almost?

A few months before I went to Barcelona, I listened as the fervent feminist at work told us in a faculty meeting that she was going to accept a job in Texas. She lamented the fact that she would have to live there but said the opportunity was too good to pass up. Her announcement turned into a free-for-all, with jokes about the backward nature of the entire state. A native Texan joined in the fun, attacking Baptists, people with rifle racks in the windows of their pickups, and other undesirables. In short, he spit on his own people. Our chief, a native of North Carolina with a thick mountain accent, smiled and laughed along with the rest.

When Dr. A—— told me that the lesson of Barcelona's history was to avoid war, I told him there were things worse than war. I didn't say what those things were, because he knew what I meant: to have your songs and your mother tongue taken from you; to raise your children as if they were foreigners; to lose your literature—in short, to lose your identity.

In Spain, it's not polite or even acceptable to ridicule a regional language or culture. But in the country where I live, people from other regions feel free to call Southerners unintelligent, uneducated, fanatically religious, filled with hate, and violent. In polite company, people laugh and agree. In my circles, to suggest that the South might have had a point about state autonomy within a federal system, a valid concern over tariffs, reasons to object to Yankee culture, or any reason to go to war other than racism is to invite those around you—including many Southerners—to say you are pro-slavery and a hatemonger.

You see, we're like the Catalans. We lost our war.

Brian Kirkpatrick writes from Augusta, Georgia.

Letter From Russia

by Andrei Navrozov

Return to Manor Farm

◆

The protagonist of a novel I'm now writing speaks in the voice of George Orwell, except that he uses the manly, tobacco-and-gin accents of reason, detachment, and persuasion to discuss love, rather than politics. The novel is called *Earthly Love*, and it will be the ninth book I've written, which is a painful thing to recount as only five of them have seen the light of day.

When, in 1993, a work of autobiography I had written under the title *The Gingerbread Race: A Life in the Closing World Once Called Free* was published in England, to some enthusiastic notices from a press then still residually highbrow and still sensible to the heritage of the Cold War, it would have pleased me to no end to hear that its thesis was an echo of the closing pages of Orwell's *Animal Farm*. But although the critics said many flattering things, some of them interesting, none was to draw this particular parallel.

As for myself, of course, I had read both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* while still a teenager in Russia. Once in the West, I went on to devour Orwell's essays and other writings, without, however, rereading the two masterworks, of which by then I remembered only the basic outlines of the plot, with the result that, in 1993, I did not make the connection between the thesis of *The Gingerbread Race* and that particular prophecy of Orwell's any more than did any of my readers.

I admire Orwell for the same reason I admire John Stuart Mill, which is the pleasure these writers give by involving the reader in the process of thinking. A woman I was once in love with asked me why I affected a stutter. I answered that, in the milieu to which I had been born, stuttering was *comme il faut*, like knowing which fork to use or how to uncork a bottle of champagne; only an intellectual parvenu would have his speeches prepared beforehand, rattling off apophthegms as though the audience had paid an entrance fee to see a conjuring act on stage; while stammering out one's thoughts made for an infinitely more refined performance, giving the audience the sense that they were every trick's intellectual progenitors, or at least coauthors. In contrast to such thinkers, Socrates, for instance, always seems to know in advance what he is going to say in the *Dialogues*, though he is clever enough and polite enough to try to conceal this.

The thesis of my book was that, in their evolutionary development, the Soviet and the American social systems were bound to merge into a single suprapolitical organism, arriving at the same ideology-free terminus at roughly the same moment by very different paths, historically thorny and almost equally circuitous. The Soviet system got there, in the half-century since 1953, by way of an alternative political culture fostered by an immensely powerful and, since Stalin's death, all but autarchic, secret-police apparatus. This culture first circumvented, then subverted, and eventually suffocated and displaced the dominant political institutions, those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, together with their official ideology, namely communism. The final, open phase of displacement began with Gorbachev and was given the name *perestroika*, or social restructuring.

The American system took longer to mature, but, as in Russia, the main event was the burgeoning of unelected decision-making elites that eventually resulted in the emergence of a single cohesive oligarchy. As in Russia, the objective of the new culture was a social *modus vivendi* whereby the people would be pacified by the practices of participatory democracy and reassured by the public functioning of its mechanisms, while the power and the policy would remain in the hands of a small, and to a large extent hereditary, political junta.

Unlike the Russian version, however, despite the fact that it had taken more than twice as long to mature, in the Unit-

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ed States the new culture never became fully coherent. Since their Tammany Hall days, American elites have been flying by the seat of their pants, as witness the simple yet significant fact that one can hardly name a single nattering nabob of negativism who can do the nattering in a language other than American English. By contrast, Arab friends who have heard the secret-police oligarch Evgeny Primakov address an audience in Arabic insist that he speaks it like a native of Syria.

Coming back to Orwell, what is remarkable about his posthumous fate is the measure of fame this subtle writer has achieved. The public debate of the last decades of the Cold War, which may be said to have ended in 1984 with the publication in Russia of a Russian translation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, had been animated by the spectral presence of Orwell, and few political commentators, right or left, had not tried to relate their versions of events to one or another of his ideas. And then, suddenly, just as the visionary's central prophecy had begun to come true, he was put away in the back of the wardrobe like an old suit of clothes that had outlived the fashion.

Yet turn to the last couple of pages of Orwell's fable, as I recently did. All I'd remembered was that the animals (that is, the Bolsheviks) of Manor Farm (meaning Russia), as it was called before they changed its name to Animal Farm (Soviet Union), were collectively a satire on the history of Russia since 1917, with the pigs eventually emerging as the Stalinist elite, which, in 1944, when *Animal Farm* was completed, was of course the only elite that mattered. Stalin saw to this by regular pruning of the secret-police apparatus, a prudent practice that his heirs were unable to maintain.

Elizabeth Wolf

But I had completely forgotten about Mr. Pilkington of Foxwood. My God, he is every inch the American Everyoligarch, from Averrell Harriman to the present day. He is George Bush incarnate. Upon his return to Animal Farm, he notes "a discipline and an orderliness which should be an example to all farmers everywhere." He puts forward the view that "between pigs and human beings there was not, and there need not be, any clash of interests whatever." And here he is in his cowboy hat, in a moment of off-the-record bonhomie, sipping a beer and slapping Gorbachev on the back: "'If you have your lower animals to contend with,' he said, 'we have our lower classes!'"

The pigs respond in kind by putting in train a process of social restructuring. Nobody now believes, says their leader, that "old suspicions" still linger, but "certain changes had been made recently in the routine of the farm which should have the effect of promoting confidence still further." Thus, the "foolish custom of addressing one another as 'Comrade'" is dropped, as are the revolutionary symbols, equivalent to the Soviet hammer and sickle, on the farm's flag. Finally, "henceforward the farm was to be known as the 'Manor Farm,'" which was "its correct and original name." And then the chill of the final paragraph:

> [A]nd they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.

On this brief visit to Manor Farm, as it is now known, I have not once used the word most associated with Orwell—namely, *totalitarianism*. But even a cursory rereading of *Animal Farm* leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that, by this word, Orwell designated a complex political reality more viable, more capable of evolution, more adept at mimicry—and, in the final analysis, more assured of survival—than the West, with its comic-book bugaboos of wicked communist and red commissar, rubber truncheon and prison bunk, was ever able to accept during the period known as the Cold War, to say nothing of the euphoric years of Pax Reagana that followed. Once again, it all comes down to the historic failure of America's governing classes to develop a culture, at any rate a culture capable of interpreting Orwell.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

Letter From Geneva

by Curtis Cate

How Cosmopolitan Can One Become?

◆

A friend of mine who worked for more than 30 years for the ILO (International Labor Organization) in Geneva was standing in a post-office queue one day when he noticed that the man just in front of him was in a curiously agitated state. "*Mais c'est impossible, intolerable!*" he kept muttering. He turned out to be a vintner who had been trying surreptitiously to extend his acreage of vineyards on the western, sun-absorbing slopes of the nearby Jura mountains by buying up new plots of land. "Those *Boches*," he exploded. "Those *Boches* will stop at nothing! You know what they did? They hired a helicopter and had it fly over my lands and take photos! Without permission or a word of warning! Ah, *ces Boches*—they are capable of anything!"

When my astonished friend asked him why on earth Germans from somewhere to the north would be indulging in aerial espionage, the vintner explained that, by "*Boches*," he did not mean Germans but "*les gens de Berne*"—snooping inspectors from the German-speaking capital of the Swiss Confederation.

It is virtually a truism to say that any inhabitant of this extraordinary land-locked confederation is first and foremost a member of his canton (of which there are 26, each with its own police and law courts) and only secondly Swiss. He (or she) is primarily a Basler from the pharmaceutical-industrial nexus of Basel; a Zürcher from the busy banking hub of Zürich; a Luzerner from the lovely lake-fronting jewel of Lucerne—on one of whose beautifully wooded, "four-canton" (*Vierwaldstätter*) shores was sealed the momentous anti-Habsburg pact of 1291; a Luganer or, more exactly, a Luganese from sun-blessed Lugano, in the Italian-speaking Ticino; or a Genevois from the world's watch-making capital of Geneva.

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What has kept the linguistic divisions—roughly 4.5 million German or *switscherdütsch* and 1.5 million French speakers—from tearing the country to pieces is a kind of earthy realism well illustrated by the ironic appellation *Röstigraben* (literally, "fried potato ditch"), which German-speaking TV-media wits coined years ago to designate the geographically unmarked but sociologically quite audible demarcation line that divides the potato-loving German speakers of central and eastern Switzerland from the French fried-cheese *raclette* or *fondue* lovers of the west and southwest.

If there is one thing no *bona fide* Genevois is prepared to do, it is to admit that his canton—which barely numbers 300,000 Swiss citizens (if one excludes 160,000 foreigners, or almost 40 percent of the total)—is in any way inferior to that of Zürich, which boasts three times as many inhabitants. Many are those who deliberately learn English as a form of protest against the obligatory teaching of German to which they are subjected in their *lycées*. Often the butt of Parisian jokes because of the singularities of their French pronunciation and the use of "unorthodox" words—*septante*, for example, instead of the cumbersome *soixante-dix* (for 70) adopted centuries ago by the supposedly more intelligent French—they are not prepared to admit any form of cultural inferiority or to regard their leading newspaper, *Le Journal de Genève*, as at all inferior to the "ponderous" *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Yet the sad fact of the matter is that the *Journal de Genève* is little more than a provincial rag compared with Zürich's NZZ, which ranks with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Munich's *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and Vienna's *Die Presse* as one of Europe's major newspapers.

Am I prejudiced? Perhaps. But I happened to be in Geneva on May 8-9 and was amazed to find that, at a time when an extraordinary galaxy of world leaders were gathering in Moscow to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, the *Journal de Genève* could find no better topic for its front-page headline than the sudden outbreak of a strike by local taxi drivers.

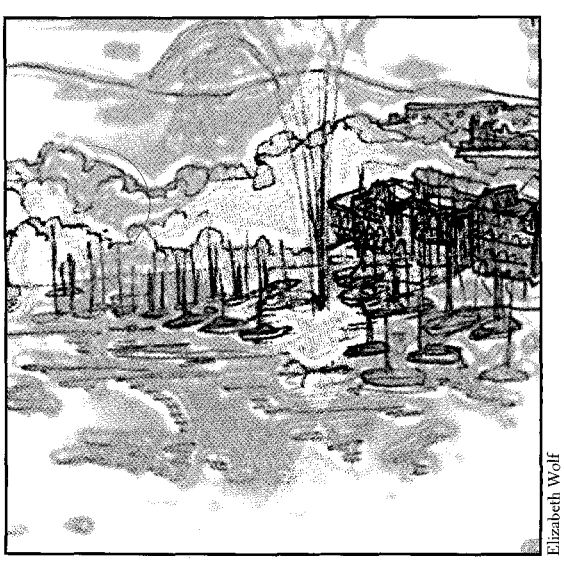
There is one distinction, however, that no one can reasonably deny to Geneva: It is unquestionably the most international of Swiss cities. This is the consequence of a momentous fatality of history. The defeat of the German Empire at the end of the catastrophic European war of 1914-18 ruled out the possibility that a German-speaking city—for example, Basel, once the home of the great peace-loving humanist Erasmus—could be chosen, in this admirably neutral land, as the ideal location for Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations. Its most imposing monument—not completed until 1936 (with the help of Rockefeller money), by which time the League, mocked by Adolf Hitler, was clearly moribund—was the Palais des Nations, a grandiose, neoclassic edifice that still looks out from the heights of the Ariana Park over the Lake of Geneva, toward the sombre Mont Salève to the east, and, when the intervening clouds are absent, to the distant snow-white summit of the Mont Blanc.

The Helvetian Confederation having managed with the same neutral tenacity to stay out of the second and even more destructive world war of 1939-45, Geneva once again logically became one of the two operative centers of the deceptively named United Nations. Today, no fewer than half-a-dozen U.N. organizations have their headquarters and main offices here, some of them in the Palais des Nations or in other buildings on the lake's "right bank"—which, five bridges and several tiny islands farther on to the west, turns into France's river Rhône. These organizations include the ILO, the WTO (World Trade Organization), the WMO (World Meteorological Organization), the WIPO (which handles international property rights), the HCR (High Commission for Refugees), and the WHO (World Health Organization). And this is not to mention the quintessentially impartial and globe-girdling ICRC (the International Committee of the Red Cross), founded by an eccentric humanitarian, Henri Dunant, in 1863—long before the short-lived League and, later, the predictably Disunited Nations had come into existence.

With a surprisingly uninhibited candor—as though the cardinal tenet of Max Weber's Protestant ethic had been rewritten to read "God helps those who enrich themselves"—Geneva today crassly advertises its capitalistic as well as cosmopolitan character. One cannot stroll along the linden-studded promenade of the Quai du Mont-Blanc, lined by a succession of posh hotels originally built for terrace-loving dowagers and daughters, for cane-carrying gentlemen and spouses, and for the glamorous *demi-mondaines* of the pre-1914 *belle époque*, without being struck by the plethora of huge signs surmounting the façades of virtually every building on both waterfronts of the gradually narrowing, v-shaped harbor. I cannot recall ever having seen such a concentration of luminous posters in any other European city; for here, as dusk descends, OMEGA, PIAGET, TISSOT, ROLEX, GUBELIN, PATHEK PHILIPPE, and other prestigious watch makers strive to outshine BANQUE DE GENEVE, ZURICH CITIGROUP, DRESDNER PRIVATE BANKING, CREDIT AGRICOLE, BNP PARIBAS, HSBC PRIVATE BANK, *etc.*, in a nocturnal contest almost worthy of Times Square.

Paradoxically, it was from this ostensibly Mammon-loving city that was long heard the shrillest anticapitalist voice in all of Switzerland: that of the incorrigibly "incorrect" Jean Ziegler, a neo-Marxist sociologist and, for decades, a deputy in the federal parliament at Bern, who was tireless in his denunciations of iniquitous Swiss banking practices.

Another homegrown "heretic"—who deserves this appellation since he claims to have severed all relations with the Muslim Brotherhood founded by his grandfather in 1928—is Tariq Ramadan, with little doubt the most prestigious, controversial, and persuasive Islamic theologian now preaching, lecturing, and writing (in English as well as French) on the Continent. (*Time* has listed him among the 100 most influential people in the world.) Born in 1962 and brought up in a four-story family house located on the Rue des Eaux-Vives (which runs roughly parallel to the Left Bank waterfront), Tariq Ramadan is, by birthright, a citizen of Geneva. He has never officially condemned the subversive activities of his grandfather, Hassan al-Banna, the Egyptian founder of the fanatically puritanical Muslim Brotherhood that Nasser, after surviving an as-



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sassination attempt, was forced to combat and persecute, just as he has never ceased to extol the memory and achievements of his almost-as-prestigious father, Said Ramadan, the "Saint Paul" of this radical Islamic movement, who shrewdly chose the tolerantly "neutral" city of Geneva as the center best suited for the pursuit of his proselytizing efforts in Europe.

Geneva, of course, was once the home and, indeed, thanks to the waters of the circumfluent river Arve, the moat-and-battlement-surrounded fortress of one of Christianity's greatest heretics, the austerely theocratic Jean Calvin. From the Left Bank's Rue des Eaux-Vives—but even more directly from one of Geneva's five bridges—it is a 15- to 20-minute uphill walk over stone-paved streets, past old stone houses of a ruggedly gray but also noble severity, to the summit of the historic mount, whose stubborn burghers, defying the irksome authority of the dukes and bishops of Savoy, established the city's stalwart republican independence by the middle of the 16th century. It is here that Geneva's most picturesque old restaurants are to be found, next to quaint booksellers, antique shops, and art galleries. And it is here, in a magnificent 18th-century townhouse situated near the originally Romanesque cathedral of Saint Pierre (sadly stripped of its internal finery by puritanical fanatics—only the stained-glass windows survived), that the present city fathers of Geneva had the excellent idea of establishing an International Museum of the Reformation. The museum honors not only Calvin but every one of those stern reformers—from Théodore de Bèze to Bénédict Pictet, from Jean Diodati to François Turrettini—with a decorative artistry, good taste, and imaginative use of audio-visual accessories I had never previously encountered in a museum of this kind.

No visitor to Geneva, no matter how hard-pressed, should leave this both ancient and modern city without visiting the charmingly restored 18th-century country house where Voltaire, very much a French exile, if not a heretic, spent five peaceful years, from 1755 to 1760. The incorrigible skeptic found this rural retreat so idyllic that he named it "*Les délices*"—a name later adopted by the inhabitants of this southwestern suburb. The Museum-Institute, as it now calls itself, contains a long, handsome library where any interested person can examine some of the 2,500 different editions of the witty sage's works, more than 1,000 original letters, no fewer than 3,200 copies, and umpteen other treasures—most of them collected and donated by Theodore Besterman, the philanthropic founder of Oxford's Voltaire Foundation. Among the original letters I was able to examine, I found this skeptical gem, which ends with a typically Voltairean pirouette. In it, the prolific letter writer took James Boswell gently to task for talking loosely of that "pretty thing, the soul . . .

> I do protest I know nothing of it,
> nor whether it is, nor what it is,
> nor
> what it shall be. Young scholars
> and priests know all that perfectly.
> For my part I am but a very ignorant fellow.
> Let it be what it will, I assure
> you my soul has a great regard
> for your own.

Whether Geneva has a "soul," be it cosmopolitan or parochial, is a question I must leave to other visitors to decide.

Curtis Cate is the author of four biographies, the most recent of Friedrich Nietzsche.

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Peace in the Holy Land, Elusive as Ever

A year ago, the prospects for peace in Israel-Palestine appeared more promising than at any other time after Bill Clinton's failed Camp David initiative in 2000. Arafat's death in November 2004 had removed a major cause of Palestinian corruption and incoherence, as well as the justification for Israel's refusal to accept direct talks. Mahmoud Abbas' victory in the Palestinian Authority (PA) election on January 9, 2005, on a platform of a nonviolent quest for peace, was widely seen as an important step toward bringing democratic reform to Palestinian society, ending terrorism, and facilitating negotiations. A day later, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon formed a new, centrist coalition, which brought the Labor Party into government and supposedly reflected the growing sense in Jerusalem that the Jewish state could not sustain an open-ended *status quo*.

The international environment also seemed favorable, with President Bush and his European partners apparently keen to make a joint push for peace that would help them overcome the unpleasantness surrounding Iraq. "The calm which will prevail in our lands starting from today is the beginning of a new era," Mr. Abbas declared at a summit meeting with Sharon in Sharm-el-Sheikh in February 2005. Mr. Sharon replied by saying that an opportunity existed "to disengage from the path of blood and start on a new path." As I noted in these pages last March, there was finally "a glimmer of hope in the Holy Land."

That glimmer has dimmed to almost nothing. We are currently witnessing simultaneous political turmoil in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, coupled with rising tensions throughout the region. At the same time, President George W. Bush's grimly unflinching preoccupation with Iraq has placed his Road Map on the back burner. Washington's loss of zeal coincides with the European Union's diminishing capacity to articulate and pursue a coherent common policy on any major world issue. In short, after yet another promise of a new dawn, the saga of Israel-Palestine is back to normal.

In Israel, the ouster of Labor's veteran leader Shimon Peres last November by Amir Peretz, a trade unionist with a populist touch, heralded the end of the coalition government. Peretz is a leftist class warrior on social and economic questions and a peacenik on the one issue that counts more than any other. For both reasons, he had pledged to take Labor out of the coalition government, if elected. He did not accept Sharon's view that the peace process must be made contingent on the end of all terrorist violence, arguing that any such precondition would give Arab opponents of a negotiated deal a strong incentive to plot new bombing attacks. He also rejected Sharon's notion that there should be some correlation between the pace of PA reform and the peace process and contended that it was in Israel's interest to negotiate immediately and unconditionally. In brief, while he would stand firm on denying "the right of return" and keeping East Jerusalem, he is, on everything else, the best interlocutor Abbas can hope for.

As soon as the victory of Peretz was announced, Sharon asked Israeli President Moshe Katsav to call an early general election. The latter made the announcement on November 21, and the date was set for March 28.

At the same time, Sharon faced a growing challenge from within his own party. The Likud was badly split over his decision to withdraw from Gaza. Former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu—who had resigned his ministerial post over the Gaza decision—was not as popular as Sharon with the electorate at large, but his following within the party was so strong that Sharon could no longer hope to unite the ranks behind him. In September, Sharon narrowly avoided defeat, garnering 52 percent of the vote to "Bibi's" 48, on Likud's 3,000-member central committee. Faced with the new crisis following the election of Peretz, Sharon reacted with a bold but not altogether unexpected move. He declared that "the Likud in its current format is unable to lead Israel to its national goals" and left the party—of which he was one of the founders back in 1973—amidst a blaze of publicity. He subsequently announced the formation of a new "liberal movement" that would "lay the foundations for a peace settlement in which the state's permanent borders will be set with the terrorist organizations being dismantled."

The emergence of Ariel Sharon as a liberal, centrist peacemaker must be one of the most remarkable political transformations since Churchill became a Tory and Mosley, a fascist. It heralded an unlikely final act in the career of the 77-year-old veteran of Israel's four wars against her Arab neighbors. In 1982, as defense minister, he planned Israel's invasion of Lebanon, which culminated with the Sabra and Shatila massacre that cost him his job. For the rest of the decade, as government minister, Sharon spearheaded the construction of dozens of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In September 2000, he visited the disputed Temple Mount to stress Israel's claim to sovereignty, triggering widespread violence and a political crisis that forced Prime Minister Ehud Barak's resignation. Such solid hard-line credentials won Sharon a landslide victory over Barak in February 2001.

Announcing the creation of his "National Responsibility Party" (Kadima), Sharon pledged his support for the two-state solution, with a "secure Israel" living side-by-side with a Palestinian state. His calculus was sound: The winning formula would include moderate Israelis, the majority of the electorate, and the plurality of more than one million Russian immigrants who had supported Sharon in the past but would not vote for the Likud without him at the helm. They dislike the Orthodox Jews and the settlers who will dominate the party after Sharon but also oppose Labor, having experienced the blessings of socialism back in the former Soviet Union.

The plan was sound, but it suffered a blow with Sharon's supposedly mild

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stroke on December 18. He was released from the hospital two days later, but the episode focused attention on his advanced age and his health. (He is grossly overweight.) It also reminded voters of the fact that the new party does not exist without Sharon. While 90 percent of his supporters say that his health will not sway them, the effect on the undecided fifth of the electorate may be more serious.

Both Labor and Likud claim that they stand to gain from any drop of confidence in Sharon's ability to lead, but the outcome of the March 28 election is likely to produce a more or less even three-way-split between the key contenders, with many smaller parties hoping for a piece of action. On current form, a coalition between Sharon and Peretz seems more likely than any combination involving Netanyahu, but the post-election horse-trading will take time. The only certainty for now is that Israel is effectively out of the "peace process" and will remain so for months to come.

If Sharon thinks *he* has problems, he should take comfort from the predicament of Mahmoud Abbas. His Fatah Party, the pliant tool of Arafat's will while he was alive, split on December 14, after a power struggle between the old and young cadres that has been simmering for a long time. Rebels joined ranks to run on a competing ticket in the PA parliamentary election scheduled for January 25, triggering the gravest crisis in the movement in decades. The dissidents' list is headed by Marwan Barghouthi, a radical who has been jailed by Israel for terrorist murders, and it heralds a determined push by the "Young Guard" to take over the party.

Abbas is stuck between a rock and a hard place. If he tries to make a deal with the dissidents, their price will be a set of demands no Israeli interlocutor could accept, Peretz included: the right of return; the dismantling of all settlements in the West Bank; the return of East Jerusalem. If he resists them, the winner will be Hamas. The Islamic militant movement scored a landslide election victory in major West Bank towns on December 16 and appeared ready to present a major challenge to Fatah regardless of its internal split. Thousands of Hamas supporters joined victory marches, chanting, "To Jerusalem we march, martyrs by the millions!" and waving copies of the Koran. "We didn't think for a moment that Hamas would win so many votes," admitted Issam Abu Baker, head of Fatah in the Nablus region. "The earth shook under our feet, and this will have an effect on the parliament."

If Hamas emerges victorious on January 25, the peace process will be effectively over for a long time. It is a movement that blends the nationalist slogans of the struggle against Israel with principles derived from the doctrines and values of Islam. In line with Islamic teaching, Hamas holds that the infidels can never legitimately usurp any previously Muslim-ruled land, such as Palestine. Whenever that happens, *jihad* becomes compulsory for all Muslims. According to the Hamas Charter, the land of Palestine has been consecrated for future Muslim generations until Judgment Day: "It, or any part of it, should not be squandered; it, or any part of it, should not be given up . . . Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors." This is a standard, orthodox Muslim position. It is derived from the Koran, from the political tradition and social outlook harking back to Muhammad. Relinquishing any part of Palestine at the negotiating table is a disobedient act of blasphemy against Allah. The struggle against Israel, for Hamas, is more than a "war of national liberation": It is *an act of worship* for which Allah rewards a struggler in the form of victory in this life and everlasting life in the hereafter.

A Hamas victory would bring to the helm of the Palestinian Authority the group that believes no permanent peace is possible because it would be against Allah's will to grant any piece of land once controlled by the faithful to the Jews. Its leaders would probably express readiness to "negotiate," to keep the "peace process" going, but they would never be able to accept in good faith Israel's legitimacy as a permanent feature of the Middle Eastern political landscape. The same spirit of intransigence was in evidence when Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called for Israel to be "wiped off the map" and immediately raised his standing all over the Muslim world. Khaled Meshal, the head of Hamas's political bureau, praised the Iranian leader at a press conference in Tehran. "It seems that the president's words did not find favor with regional and international leaders," he said, "but despite this, the Muslim public supported Iran on this issue in the past and will also support it in the future. The Iranian government's position on Palestine fills Muslim hearts with pride."

There should be no doubt that Ahmadinejad's words reflect the feeling in the "street." The roots of Muslim hatred of Jews are deep, and they antedate the problem of Israel-Palestine by some 13 centuries. The Iranian leader's histrionics remind us of the need to be aware of the historical record of political Islam and to harbor no illusions about its ultimate ambitions today. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was on to something real when he declared, in December 1992, that his country's "struggle against murderous Islamic terror is also meant to awaken the world, which is lying in slumber." We should be no less aware, however, that a common problem of global *jihad* is sometimes used by the government of Israel as a cover for policies that facilitate its growth.

The brief upswing of a year ago in the manic-depressive cycle of Arab-Israeli affairs is over for now. Another may come soon, or not so soon, but, in the interim, the United States would be well advised to stay away and allow the situation to become clearer. It is in the American interest to help resolve the festering sore of Israel-Palestine, but not to do so when the major players are not ready or willing to play along. It is in the American interest for us to follow the example of the Lords, from William Gilbert's memorable refrain:

When Wellington thrashed
  Bonaparte,
As every child can tell,
The House of Peers, throughout
  the war,
Did nothing in particular,
And did it very well . . .

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LANGUAGE

Totally Awesome

by Nicole Kooistra

A few nights ago, some friends and I were on our way to a small get-together. As we ambled up the sidewalk, Rachel, whom I had met at the university I used to attend, commented that the neighborhood was rather "sketchy." I almost hugged her. "Sketchy!" I nearly shouted. "That's a word I haven't heard in a while." She immediately understood and laughed at my enthusiasm, while the others looked on, perplexed. *Sketchy* was a very popular word at my old school, and, although it is undoubtedly used with the same meaning in other places, it immediately brought back memories of friends.

Later, I gave this incident some thought. A word that originally referred to drawing is now used, at least in some quarters, to describe unsavory characters or places. A place you would not want to be after dark is "sketchy." A party at which there is illicit activity can be described as having "a lot of sketch." The word will eventually be useless, applied to everything with a slightly negative connotation. It is a typical example of college slang but also of my generation's inability to communicate.

Slang does have its uses. It can be part of the cement that bonds students or colleagues together, and it can become a link to people or places once held dear. Slang can also be useful for giving a name to new or unusual activities. In college dormitories, the word *sexile* has been coined to describe what happens when one's roommate is occupied in one's room. It is usually used in verb form—"John's roommate has his girlfriend here for a visit, so John has been *sexiled* for the night." It is a crude word, to be sure, but one that efficiently describes something that occurs all too frequently.

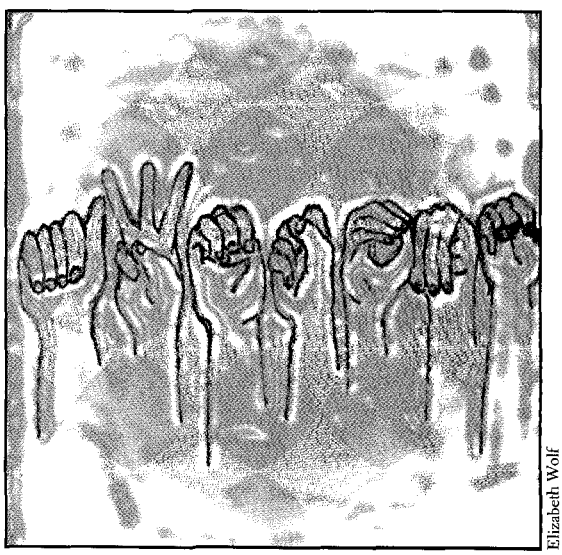
While good slang adds to precision, the opposite is more frequently the case in modern youthspeak. Take, for example, the word *awesome*, which remains a favorite with those under 20. In ancient times (a few decades ago), *awesome* referred to something that filled one with fear, reverence, and humility. It was a powerful word, used in Scripture to describe God, often with the word *terrible* close by. These days, anything from a TV program to breakfast cereal can be "awesome." The result is that we no longer have a familiar word to describe the sublime. When a 20-something wishes to refer to something awesome, in the original sense, he has to call it "really really awesome" or otherwise overemphasize the overworked word. AWESOME!!! A similar example is *great*, which, like *awesome*, was originally used to describe something of truly staggering quality or proportions.

Other slang words have become equally useless. *Ghetto* now refers to anything of substandard quality—"Dude, my old car is so ghetto." The words *cool*, *tight*, and *sweet* all mean "something I like." One of my all-time favorites is *chick*, which is used even by women to refer to women. Nothing is so flattering as calling oneself the immature offspring of a domestic fowl. The same process of generalization has degraded such good words as *terrific* (as well as *terrible*), *fantastic*, and *wonderful*.

Slang is a part of the constantly evolving nature of language itself, as words are coined and eventually work their way into formal usage. But it also signifies a certain informal register, and there was a time when a young person was capable of communicating with his betters without using it. I am not so fortunate. When I speak to my professors, I am usually unable to prevent a "like" from slipping into the conversation. The case becomes even more difficult when I wish to express an intricate set of ideas. The very qualities that make informal language what it is—a lack of specificity, an overuse of the same words, generalization of meaning, *etc.*—also make it unsuitable for expressing the very complex thoughts and feelings that make us human. When I wish to be serious, I have to stop speaking and hunt for the appropriate language to explain my thoughts. By the time I am ready, my companion has probably grown bored with the subject. Slang is no longer informal; it is a significant part of the only way I have to express myself, and it is, by its very nature, unsuited to the task.

This reliance on a single register of language did not develop overnight. It has been a long and painful process, one that reflects our increasing dependence on consumable entertainment. For a book to be considered worthwhile, it has nothing but its prose to recommend it. Television has no such hindrance, and language becomes more of a barrier than a blessing on the typical TV program. A TV director has only a fraction of a second in between channel flips to catch the viewer's eye, and, to keep us watching, the program relies not on eloquent and powerful language but on passion, intensity, and shock, all of which must be conveyed quickly. What we could regain through conversation with others, we forfeit by shutting ourselves into our own little worlds. The most common sight after class on my campus is that of a student plugging in the earphones of his iPod before heading off to the next class. Nothing says "Don't talk to me" like that ominous white cord dangling around the neck.

We are, for the most part, unable to use anything but the informal language of everyday speech, and so we adopt the verbiage of others and thus become the dupes of any group with an axe to grind. The result is that the world must assume we mean what we say, when we have no other way to say what we mean. This must be the worst form of self-enslavement. An ominous example of what is to come existed in Old Norse, which



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had one word to describe colors ranging from dark blue to black. Modern linguists cannot declare with certainty whether the early Scandinavians simply lacked the appropriate vocabulary to describe these colors or whether they were unable to perceive the difference between them. Years from now, my descendants may look back and wonder whether I was incapable of distinguishing between the awe inspired by God and the pleasure I take in an exceptionally tasty breakfast cereal.

Nicole Kooistra, who is studying English literature at Northern Illinois University, is the assistant to the president of The Rockford Institute.

EDUCATION

The Real Crisis of Higher Education

by Clay Reynolds

The current debate about the state and future of higher education seems to center on the question of whether a college degree is a "privilege" or a "right." The loudest argument is that any high-school graduate who has followed a "college pathway" and has made decent grades should be admitted to a state institution of higher learning. The assumed "right" is expressed in the phrase "any student"; the "privilege," in "decent grades." Admission to college is only part of the process, though; financing college is another. The lines are blurred when the capability to pay for higher education becomes a potential restriction of the student's "right" to take advantage of the "privilege." At some point, the question of the "worth" of the whole process must come into play.

Fifty years ago, a university degree was the province of the wealthy and the upper-middle class. Poorer (mostly white) students could attend college if they received merit- or talent-based scholarships or if they qualified for the G.I. Bill. Students still try to "work their way through," but it is almost impossible to pay for tuition, fees, books, and room and board for even a minimum course load with part-time wages.

Both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, responding to what was called the "Education Gap" and the "Brain Drain," initiated financial-aid programs to enable any qualified high-school graduate to attend college. Largely, these measures were designed to make education accessible to minorities; actually, they had their greatest impact on the working middle class. The National Defense Student Loan program was joined by a number of others to ensure that no one was denied a college degree because of financial constraints. The result was a flood of "first-generation" students whose parents never dreamed of a university degree for themselves and who probably did not think that their children would go to college, either.

In those days, though, a high-school diploma was a significant mark of academic achievement. That notion rapidly faded as the secondary-school certificate was devalued to a stepping stone toward a college diploma, something that was then, in turn, degraded in favor of a graduate or professional degree. Many professions that did not require a B.A. now demand advanced degrees or post-graduate certification. Even today, a B.A. is not necessary for someone to be a contributing, well-informed, responsible member of society. A high-school diploma should be sufficient for adult life and vocational qualifications, equipping most for any number of careers in which experience and craftsmanship count more than the ability to solve differential equations or recite a Shakespearean sonnet.

Many students—no one knows for sure how many, for there is no standardized test for it—truly do not *want* to be in college in the first place. Some are not ready for it emotionally; some of those who think they are have found the experience damaging. College has become the "next logical step" after high school; but no one is truly questioning either the logic or the necessity of taking it. Those students who find themselves trapped in a college curriculum and realize that they have no commitment to it usually wind up flunking out or, more commonly, dragging themselves through the courses, earning minimally passing grades, learning nothing, just getting by.

Automatically marching high-school graduates into college and stigmatizing those who refuse to jump through this hoop is unfair; but the announcement that a child has chosen to forgo college is often greeted with dour expressions of sympathy, as if the youngster has a disease. But if high schools did not have to concentrate on preparing students for advanced learning and to take standardized tests, their diplomas might yet be sufficient preparation for work and life. This might also keep millions of students from taking on a burden of debt to pay for something they did not want or need in the first place.

Defaults on federally insured notes have become a huge problem. Periodic economic downturns leave many degreed students unable to find professional employment and lead some graduates to decide that the money they have borrowed for their education was wasted, especially when they find themselves working in jobs they could have held without a B.A. Many believe that they have earned the right to enjoy better lifestyles and higher-paying jobs with advancement potential. When those rewards don't come, they feel scammed.

No one in higher education ever said that a college degree guaranteed a job. The point of attending college is to obtain a broader understanding of the world, a deeper comprehension of fields of study. Certainly, those students seeking to enter a profession such as medicine or law recognize that such learning is a prefatory step; but astute students recognize that their collegiate purpose is not to be "trained" but to learn so they can later be trained or further educated, and then, *maybe*, employed.

The loan programs initiated in the 1960's were effectively gutted by the Reagan administration when they were ended or privatized. (State programs quickly followed suit.) Before Reagan, a student who borrowed money for an education could defer repayment by joining the Peace Corps or enlisting for military service; those who became teachers were allowed to discount up to 50 percent of their debt. That program ultimately produced a generation of career teachers.

Under Reaganomics, the programs were drastically altered. Government-insured loans were still available at modest rates, but they now came from private lenders, meaning students had no chance of negotiating if they were unable to repay. Defaults soon reached a crisis point. Today, obtaining a loan for college is an onerous business. It requires pages of paperwork (in which the details of the borrower's private life are disclosed) and a raft of difficult qualifications. Repayment schedules are inflexible, even threatening; many loans

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require repayment to start almost immediately. Some students emerge from college owing $75,000 or more, but unless they are "trained" for immediate and lucrative employment, they are exceedingly liable to default. Many students fail to "qualify" for a federally insured loan because some number cruncher in a cubicle somewhere deemed that the "family contribution" is sufficient to cover the cost of college or because they are only marginally qualified in an academic sense—a determination usually made on the basis of the SAT. These youngsters are then thrown on the mercy of private lenders who are not bound by federal guarantees; some of these are legal con artists who promise low interest and easy payback but demand collateral or garnish wages or even slap liens on the family home.

What would work would be a revival of a key element of the National Defense program, extending deferment and even partial forgiveness of debt beyond teaching or soldiering to other vitally needed professional areas: doctors and healthcare workers in rural communities and urban clinics, lawyers for the poor, social workers for straining public agencies, small-town city engineers, management assistance for small businesses, law enforcement. Such a program might produce a cadre of highly experienced professionals.

All of this, though, avoids the larger issue: the declining quality of the education itself. Like the question of financing college degrees, it also centers on money. Most state legislatures, sensitive to the rising cost of higher education, are now committed to quantifying education. The watchword is *accountability*, although no one is sure how to measure it. The answer that is most often given is the standardized exam.

Even a part-time substitute teacher knows that all a standardized test measures is a student's ability to take a standardized test. Each student is unique, and each learning curve is particular. No exam can measure what a student knows or has the potential to learn. Some students are simply better at test taking than others, and some who are not so good at it may actually be smarter and have more potential than those who are. Even ardent supporters of the college boards will admit privately that standardized testing is one of the greatest hoaxes ever perpetrated on the American public; regardless, from elementary school forward, standardized-test results are used as absolute measurements of learning.

The value of a higher degree lies in the student's ability to apply what he has learned on a theoretical basis to a practical reality. A college education is a learning process, one that encourages independent thinking, creative imagination, and the development of new and innovative ideas. Unfortunately, the elements that help to ensure these features, tenure and academic freedom, are under attack; at the same time, student "rights" have become student "entitlements," and many are enforced by the civil code. The result is that the quality of higher education erodes, largely owing to the mandate that schools do more with less and do it regardless of actual learning. All that matters is that the sheepskin is in hand after four years. In the meantime, side effects, such as academic dishonesty, grow to epidemic proportions.

Sadly, most students don't seem to care. The grade-conscious assiduously avoid any course that might damage their GPA. It's the diploma that counts; that they might have to earn it is not a consideration. You shouldn't have to pay for something *and* earn it, right? If universities merely opened a kiosk on the quad and offered degrees for so-many thousand dollars—"Diplomas printed while you wait!" "On-the-spot financing available!"—the lines would likely be as long as they are at the registrar's offices.

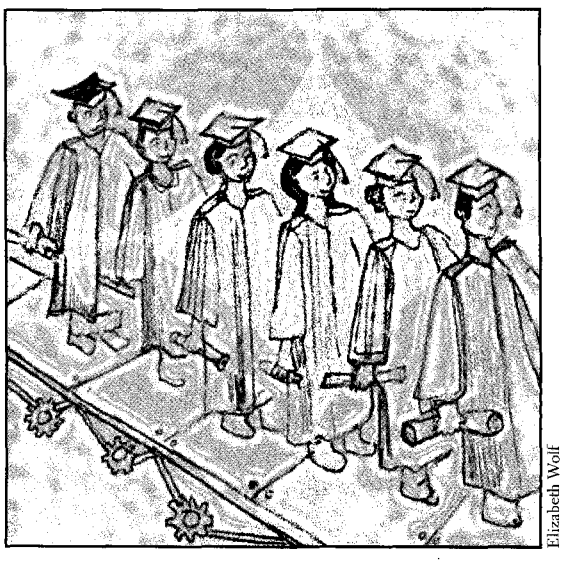
Much has been said in state legislatures about how to "fix" higher education. Unfortunately, the repairs require a painful acknowledgement that we get what we pay for, and this is a reality that politicians simply will not face. But the money has to come from somewhere, or the current erosion will become catastrophic. Nowhere is this more evident than in the shortage of qualified faculty.

Increasingly, colleges are relying on part-time, adjunct faculty to staff burgeoning classrooms and to cover vital areas that would otherwise be neglected. State budgets forbid permanent hires, and starting salaries remain so low in many cases, that, personal dedication aside, anyone who is qualified to do almost anything else probably will. Even salaries for most tenure-track professors average less than one can make managing a fast-food restaurant or full-time bartending, jobs that do not require a diploma. In most cases, salary ceilings are so low in higher education that the maximum professorial salary is less than the starting salary some college graduates expect.

Faculty teaching the fundamental courses in many institutions—courses that fulfill state-mandated requirements in literacy, science, math, and social studies—are so overworked that it is a wonder students learn anything. Desperately understaffed universities hire adjunct and part-time faculty to teach these courses; many of these people also teach full loads in local community colleges, as they need the extra work to supplement their low incomes.

Meanwhile, universities create "mega-sections," classes where between 150 and 750 (or more) students are herded into large auditoriums and taught by a single faculty member (often assisted by minimally qualified "graders") in lectures sometimes delivered *via* closed-circuit television. Oftentimes, the professor never actually sees any students; in some cases, the professor isn't even on campus. Exams are given on a standardized basis, of course, and often graded by machine; students are shunted through a process of mass instruction with no regard for individual learning. Even in classes where the focus and scope of the subject matter require concentrated discussion, enrollments are nearly twice what they should be.

Some colleges are under a mandate to show a profit. The operative word is *retention*, and woe to the faculty member who fails too many. Standards evaporate as administrators commit themselves to squeezing every dime they can out of every enrollee. "Open Admission" is the policy at many state colleges, whereby



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anyone who shows up is signed up. ("Our entrance requirement is a warm body and cold cash," one registrar told me.) The result is that the functionally illiterate and mathematically inept—students who often only got out of high school by the barest margin—sit next to students who may have been graduated in the tops of their classes.

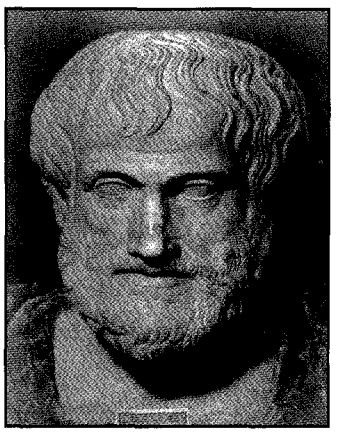
At the same time, universities struggle with aging, overcrowded buildings, decrepit physical plants, deteriorating infrastructures, and inadequate labs. Faculty labor under declining morale and a sense of fatalistic acceptance. And while all these issues simmer in the background, administrators are required to devote much of their time (up to 80 percent, in some cases) to hustling private money to keep the doors open and classes running. Ruinously expensive athletic programs chew up billions and bring in millions from alumni who demand entertainment. All of this has produced the academic equivalent of the school kid going door-to-door selling junky products so his school can buy necessary equipment that should have come out of the school budget.

Past all of these graveyards of wasted ideals, state governments whistle along, happily consulting with "experts" in business and industry, some of whom may actually have been to college, ignoring the very people who know what the problems are and have meaningful solutions to suggest. Professorial names do not make good headlines; the names of CEOs and millionaires do. The attitude of legislatures seems to be that schools should be run like corporations. To them, universities are "factories," and graduates are "product," and students are merely the "raw material" from which products are fashioned. Faculty are assembly-line workers, affixing parts to machines in production as they roll by. No one cares about quality. A shiny coat of paint is far more important than performance, especially since there's no warranty to worry about.

While "throwing more money" into higher education will not solve all of the problems, they cannot be solved without more money. Education at any level is a costly loss-leader. It requires constantly increasing contributions of large sums merely to sustain itself. To grow, more is needed. To improve, huge amounts are required. The return isn't visible. You cannot put it on a spreadsheet or calculate it on a bar graph. You cannot measure it or stand off and admire it. The rewards may not appear for generations. But the penalties will emerge if the problems are ignored and the imbecilic notion persists that a student's learning can be somehow quantified and placed on a chart.

Ultimately, it is an issue of whether people honestly believe that a well-informed and intellectually developed mind is a better prospect than a robotic respondent who has gone through the motions but who has never learned to think, create, and devise independent solutions to problems others have not yet imagined. Unless we are prepared to take that step, the question of whether a higher degree is a "right" or a "privilege" is a silly matter for debate. The larger problems should be solved by people who do the teaching, however, not by a group moved by (often partisan) political impulses. Asking a legislature to find such solutions is rather like asking people who seldom wash to solve the problems facing soap makers.

Clay Reynolds is professor and associate dean for undergraduate studies for the School of Arts & Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas.



The Greek Conservative Mind

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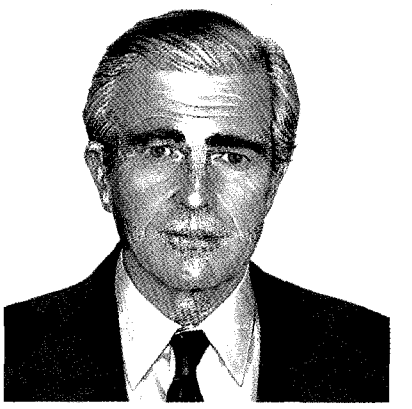
by George McCartney

Out of Gas



Syriana

Produced and distributed by Warner Brothers
Written and directed by Stephen Gaghan

George Clooney wants you to know that he's got gravitas. To prove it, he packed on an extra 35 pounds for his latest roles. In *Good Night, and Good Luck*, a film he directed, he plays Fred Friendly, the portly television producer who worked closely with Edward R. Murrow at CBS. Now, in Steven Gaghan's *Syriana*, a film Clooney helped produce, he pads about the oven-hot Middle East in a full-face beard, looking like a miserable, overfed zoo bear. He is Bob Barnes, a fictional character based on Bob Baer, a disaffected former CIA operative. Since Baer has looked quite trim and upbeat in his recent television appearances, Clooney's decision to play him as a morose fatty seems strange. Has he succumbed to Oscar fever? Getting fat for art has become Hollywood's *ne ultra plus* demonstration of thespian integrity. Robert DeNiro and Charlize Theron have won Oscars for flaunting flab on screen; maybe Clooney will also.

I mention the fat factor because, like Clooney, *Syriana* is bloated with its own gravitas. The film begs to be rewarded for its seriousness. It has the look and feel of a gritty, no-holds-barred dramatization of America's fatal involvement with Middle East oil politics, but, like Clooney, with his expanded waistline and ponderous fat-man gait, the film is an ungainly attempt to limn the reality of its subject. Most of its missteps are individually negligible but, taken collectively, rather irritating. For instance, Clooney's CIA field agent has been on the job for 27 years, yet he is scandalized to learn that the bureaucrats in Langley occasionally put self-serving politics above mission objectives. Would such a veteran really be surprised that his office-bound bosses were liable to become miffed when he told them bluntly that their homespun theories did not reflect life in the Third World? Then there are the howlers. In one startling scene, Prince Nasir Al-Subaai (Alexander Siddig), an Oxford-educated sheik and *emir*-in-waiting, holds a meeting with his supporters. Sitting cross-legged on a sumptuous carpet in his snow-white Arabic robes, he implores his similarly garbed followers, with Bernard Lewis reasoning, to consider why their country and Arabs generally are losing their place in the world. Surely they understand that, by refusing to embrace democracy, parliamentary government, and women's equality, they are consigning themselves to history's dustbin. When his 20 listeners give unhesitating assent to his propositions, you know Gaghan is either a daft dreamer or a hypocrite. If I had to bet, I would say the latter. I suspect he wanted to head off charges that he is an Islamophobe. After all, his film depicts other Muslim leaders as ruthless kleptomaniacs plundering their countries' resources with heartless disregard for their people's needs. It is to be expected, I suppose, that he would want us to know that there are Arab potentates who are all right, really—especially those who went to Oxford and speak proper English. His noble sheik reminds me of the noble Mexican cop in his earlier film, *Traffic*. Despite living in Tijuana, a city infamous for its bottomless corruption, this lawman is willing to put himself and his family at lethal risk to help the FBI bring down the narco thugs in power. For a reward, he only wants a pledge that the Americans will build a baseball field for Tijuana's boys. Girls, too—I cannot remember exactly—but I am sure that, in the interest of American acceptability, Gaghan purged the officer of any vestigial machismo.

Despite such ethnocentric lapses, *Syriana* has much to recommend it. At the very least, it serves as a wake-up call. When it comes to the tedious realities of oil finance and politics, we are all too liable to snooze, as Gaghan implies in a particularly caustic exchange between Arab and American. It is a scene in which Gaghan announces his purpose indirectly. Matt Damon, playing a hotshot oil-industry analyst ("I work in derivatives," he announces with the kind of insouciance Andrew Carnegie would have appreciated), is trying to persuade Nasir to adapt to new market exigencies, including the region's diminishing oil supply. The sheik who seems to have been half-listening to Damon's spiel turns on him and asks what American power brokers really think of his countrymen. Exasperated, Damon angrily shoots back, "They think a hundred years ago you were lopping one another's heads off in the desert and a hundred years from now you'll be doing it again." Smiling faintly, the sheik responds with a command, "Tell me something I don't know already." But for all his ironic hauteur, the prince is wrong. We all need to be reawakened to what we think we know now and again, especially if it is a reality immediately in front of our half-closed eyes. And this Gaghan does well, if a bit more elliptically than necessary.

Gaghan's take on the oil industry is that it is much the same as the drug trade. In a recent interview on Chris Matthews' *Hardball* on MSNBC, he compared cheap oil to crack cocaine. It is a substance that has seduced America into a century-long addiction, and, now that it is becoming too expensive, we do not know how to rid ourselves of the destructive habit. Worse, those in power do not want us to give it up. It is too profitable for the insiders: oil executives, politicians, lawyers, and regulators. Even environmentalists stand to lose, should we give up oil dependency too quickly. With big oil as the bogeyman, the do-gooders can always scare up funds for their enobling causes. And those among them who have the necessary managerial skills can enter the federally subsidized clean-up business. As with illicit drugs, an incredibly complex system of rewards has developed around oil over the years, and those living off its largesse are loath to see the party end, even now that oil's dangers have become vastly more urgent than escalating prices and environmental pollution. Our interven-

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tion in Middle Eastern affairs on behalf of our oil interests has given the Muslim world reason to hate us. Furthermore, the profits they have garnered from selling their oil has given them the means to strike at us. Yes, we know all this, but it somehow recedes from our awareness in the press of daily events until a new price hike at the gas pump temporarily reminds us. Rising prices, however, have not been enough to prompt sufficient outrage among Americans. Incredibly, with nearly 30 years of warning signals, we are still not ready to force the issue and demand alternative energy sources. We have been asleep at the wheel, our tank on low. Gaghan's film performs one of drama's traditional purposes: It awakens us to the urgency of what we already know.

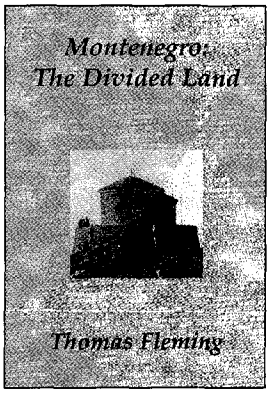
To render the tangle of interests oil has produced around the world, Gaghan has assembled multiple narrative threads, each telling its separate yet connected story. Clooney's burnt-out spy and Damon's financial wizard are joined, on the home front, by two Texan oil companies cutting a suspicious deal. One is a behemoth named Connex; the other, a tiny operation named Killen led by former wildcatter Jimmy Pope (played by Chris Cooper with rascally ferocity). The company names are comically chosen. Killen has made a killing in Kazakhstan, bribing government officials to gain exclusive drilling rights to the country's oil fields. This prompts Connex to connect with Killen. After losing its long-standing drilling rights to a Chinese concern in Nasir's country, the Connex CEO decides to get in on the Kazakhstan deal by merging with Killen. This, however, does not set well with the Department of Justice, whose attorneys hire the law firm of Dean Whiting (Christopher Plummer at his oiliest best) to perform a due-diligence investigation. But, as the investigation proceeds, the Justice Department attorneys discover that the deal is so "balance positive" for the U.S. of A. that they had better not undo it after all. To save face, they cut their own deal with Whiting's investigator, Bennett Holiday (Jeffrey Wright), a stolid, close-to-the-vest black achiever who knows only too well how to play Whiting's white-man game. He offers to supply the government counsel with just enough evidence to prosecute sacrificially two lesser players in the intrigue for appearance's sake. Meanwhile, Whiting has been retained by someone else, whose identity we never learn. It could be the current administration, the CIA, the National Security Administration, our own home-grown oil cartel, or some unholy combination of the above. Whoever it is, Whiting undertakes to scuttle Nasir's elevation to *emir* by pressuring and bribing his aging father to install his younger and considerably more malleable son. Nasir has made the critical error of trying to get out from under American interests by doing business with the Chinese. For this breach of etiquette, he begins to be called a terrorist by the bureaucrats at Langley, who give Barnes a new mission. As his superior puts it, "It's one that fits your specific skill set." He is to have Nasir assassinated.

From this point, the film turns conventional, even including an exciting race to its nearly surprising climax, an event that almost manages to bring the film's various plot shards into kaleidoscopic focus. One of these shards seems a difficult fit, at first, but it falls into place chillingly at the conclusion. It concerns a Pakistani guest worker in Nasir's oil fields. He is dismissed when the Chinese company takes over and quickly finds himself impoverished and without prospects in a strange land whose officials enjoy pushing him around every chance they get. He is a perfect candidate for local Islamic fundamentalists, who soon have him convinced that his woes have roots in the West, which is not wholly untrue. And so another suicide bomber is born.

With all these interests and intrigues in play, Gaghan hopscotches among his principals, giving us vivid but deliberately incomplete glimpses of their various machinations. He has justified this storytelling method on the grounds that it fairly reflects the opacity of the oil-industry dealings that befuddle the American public whenever they try to make sense of them. Still, I could not help wondering whether Gaghan was obfuscating matters so that he could cover gaps in his knowledge under a blizzard of abbreviated details. Whatever the case, I came away from the film thinking there was a bit less to it than meets the eye.

What does emerge rather clearly is this: Oil has unleashed an insatiable and deadly greed that corrupts everyone it touches, innocent and villainous alike. It is a force that promises to destroy us by several means: impossible cost, encompassing pollution, virulent terrorism, and outright war. There is only one escape: We must break the addiction. While this is not news, it bears saying again and again.

I have made fun of Clooney's and Gaghan's gravitas lust; nevertheless, I respect their attempt to deal with issues other filmmakers studiously ignore. I only hope writers and directors with a stronger hold on reality will be inspired by their success to make films of their own and that the studios will see the wisdom—financial and otherwise—of supporting them. ‹C›



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The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

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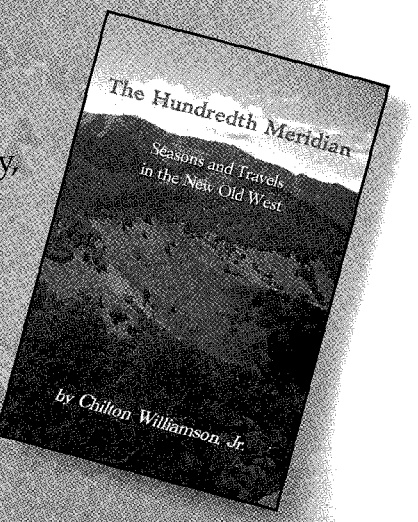

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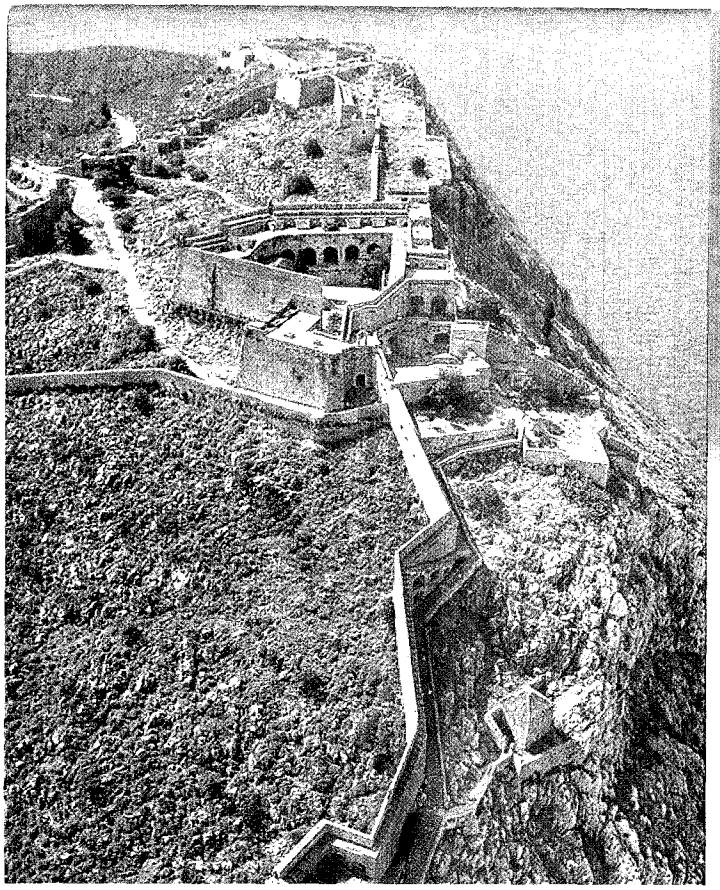

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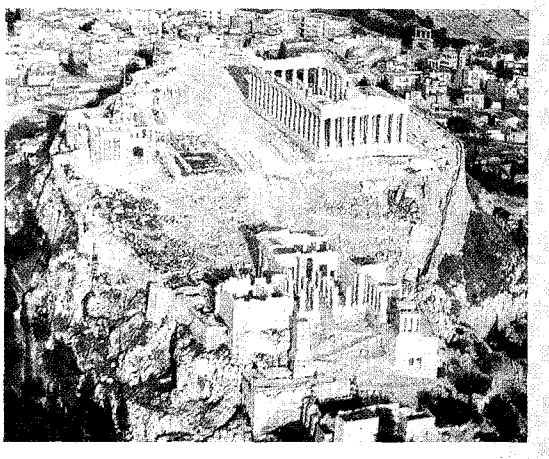

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